Indira Gandhi National Open University
School of Interdisciplinary and
Trans-disciplinary Studies

MPYE – 015

Gandhian Philosophy

Block 1

INTRODUCTION TO GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY

UNIT 1

Context and Emergence of Gandhian Philosophy

UNIT 2

Metaphysical Teachings of Gandhi

UNIT 3

Gandhian Understanding of Man

UNIT 4

Ethical Teachings of Gandhi

Expert Committee

Prof. Gracious Thomas
Director, School of
Social Work, IGNOU

Prof. Renu Bharadwaj
School of Humanities
IGNOU

Prof. George
Panthanmackel,
Senior Consultant,
IGNOU

Dr. M. R. Nandan
Govt. College for
Women
Mandya - Mysore

Dr. Kuruvila
Pandikattu
Jnana-deepa
Vidyapeeth
Ramwadi, Pune

Dr Babu Joseph
CBCI Centre
New Delhi

Prof. Tasadduq Husain
Aligarh Muslim
University, Aligarh

Dr. Bhuvaneswari
Lavanya Flats
Gangai Amman Koil
Thiruvanmiyur
Chennai – 600 041

Dr. Alok Nag
Vishwa Jyoti Gurukul
Varanasi

Dr. Jose Kuruvachira
Salesian College &
IGNOU Study Centre
Dimapur, Nagaland

Dr. Sathya Sundar
Sethy
Dept of Humanities
IIT, Chennai.

Dr. Joseph Martis
St. Joseph’s College
Jeppu, Mangalore – 2

Dr. Jaswinder Kaur
Dhillon
147, Kabir park
Opp. GND University
Amristar – 143 002

Prof. Y.S. Gowramma
Principal,
College of Fine Arts,
Manasagangotri
Mysore – 570 001

Block Preparation

Units 1-3	Dr. Bharath Kumar School of Humanities and Social Sciences IIT, Indore.
Unit 4	Dr. Chinnaiah Sri Venkateshwara University Tirupati, Andra Pradesh.

Content Editor

Dr. V. John Peter
St. Joseph’s Philosophical College,
Kotagiri, Tamil Nadu.

Format Editor

Prof. Gracious Thomas
IGNOU, New Delhi.

Programme Coordinator

Prof. Gracious Thomas
IGNOU, New Delhi.

BLOCK INTRODUCTION

India's freedom struggle is a long and fascinating story. It was an ideological conflict between the emerging Indian Nationalism and entrenched British Imperialism. Gandhi appeared on the political firmament of India and imparted a new momentum to the nationalist movement. Gandhi's rise in Indian politics gave a new hope to the people. He imparted to the great national organization a new dynamic spirituality for combat, which he produced by rediscovering the long forgotten strings of the Indian genius, and effecting a synthesis between the ancient civilization of India and modern western civilization. Gandhi said the eternal truths could be applied to daily life and problems. Devotion to truth was the one characteristic of Gandhi. Love of truth led him to all kinds of disciplines and experiments. He always began with smaller problems and applied the success he achieved to greater problems. *Satyagraha* is a moral or spiritual struggle against political and economic domination which implies denial of truth. For Gandhi, truth is not only a metaphysical category but also a moral and spiritual concept signifying the importance of truth in life.

Unit 1 aims to throw some light on the unique context and the advent of Gandhi into a national leader. Specifically placing Gandhian ideologies and activities in the actual context and analyzing the emergence of the phenomenon of Gandhi and his philosophy by having a cursory look at the works he undertook would help us in understanding Gandhian philosophy.

Unit 2 brings us the understanding of Gandhi's world-view and the underlying metaphysical principles that shaped his out-look. Gandhi considered himself to be a religious man and that it was his study of religions that led him from piety to ethics and from ethics to metaphysics. Gandhi imbibed a passion for truth and belief in God from the religious atmosphere of his family. From theistic position where God is personal, Gandhi's attitude developed into a metaphysical position where God is 'The Eternal Principle' and 'the Universal Law'. His world-view is rooted in the fundamental metaphysical ideas. God (Truth), World and Man constitute his basic ontological principles.

The **Unit 3** aims to cover Gandhi's views on human nature and seeks to understand Gandhi's philosophy of man. The concept of human nature is of vital significance in any system of thought. Gandhi considered all life sacred whether human or non-human, for non-human beings too were divine in nature and legitimate members of the cosmos.

Unit 4 dwells upon the moral teachings of Gandhi who is a great ethical philosopher. It explains Gandhian concept of non-violence, truth, non-stealing, celibacy and his ideas on shaping human character etc. Non-violence is free from physical and psychological violence in living. Non-violence is a discovery of truth. Truth is God. Truth is which is. Truth is a virtue. Celibacy is abstention from self-indulgence by thought, speech and action. Character is moral and ethical strength. Character comes from within.

COURSE INTRODUCTION

The emergence of Gandhi played a pivotal role in the history of Indian Nationalism. He took the country by storm with his novel political ideologies centred on the cardinal principles of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha*. Armed with these ideological tools Gandhi shouldered critical responsibilities in the momentous events that finally led India to the path of freedom. Gandhi's political ideals were merely an extension of his spiritual tenets, which were rooted in deep humanitarian values. Gandhi's greatness lies not only within pioneering a unique fervor in Indian politics and the rise of the masses, but in the way he revolutionized the entire way of looking at politics as an extension of mankind's inherent greatness, enriched with an innate belief in and commitment to truth. Gandhian call of *Ahimsa* is to use the ' love- force' or 'brute-force' to overcome evil not by inflicting injury or death on the evil-doer but by self-suffering with ardent and earnest hope of bringing about a change of heart in the evil-prone antagonist. Gandhi invoked traditional concepts but he imparted to them a new social content. Gandhi's philosophy has been interpreted from different angles. Some treat it primarily as a political theory. Others approach it as a religious philosophy of great contemporary relevance. Still others see it as an original theory of conflict resolution and non-violence. There are those who regard it as containing ideas extremely relevant for both economic development and for the maintenance of a sustainable economy. Finally there are those who find in it significant ideas on the relationship of art to society.

The Block 1 tries to place the whole philosophy, activity and the person of Gandhi in his socio-cultural political context. Gandhi is widely recognized as the preeminent theorist of nonviolent civil disobedience, the leader of India's successful campaign for national independence and an architect of modern Indian self-identity.

Block 2 illustrates Gandhian philosophy of religion. Gandhi’s theism as well as the influences of Advaita Philosophy are mentioned. Gandhian views of the way to God and his explanation for the existence of evil in the world are included. Comprehension of Gandhian views on liberation and the existence of evil in the world find place here.

Block 3 exposes the socio-political thought of Gandhi. *Ahimsa* in the hands of Gandhi became an efficacious social and political technique of action. *Satyagraha* becomes a constructive activity that supplies civility to disobedience. *Sarvodaya* aims at the integral liberation of every individual. The goal of *Sarvodaya* includes ultimately the self-realization of every individual. Total self-realization, according to Gandhi, is the god-realization. His interpretation of caste as social order is widely contestable.

Block 4 takes the students to a lively discussion on the relevance of Gandhian Philosophy. In India, there has long been the legacy of non-violence propagated by Mahatma Gandhi. *Ahimsa* was used by Gandhi successfully in mobilizing the masses to fight the British, which ultimately was forced to leave. But what is significant is that in addition to the removal of foreign rule, he wanted to establish a democratic order, free from political, economic and social exploitation. The success of *ahimsa* as a political strategy became the subject of much discussion and analysis. Besides that his holistic vision of life, egalitarianism and peaceful and harmonious society are brought to the consideration of students.

UNIT 1 CONTEXT AND EMERGENCE OF GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY

Contents

1.0 Objectives
1.1 Introduction
1.2 Context
1.3 Gandhi in the Indian Political Arena
1.4 Emergence as an All India Leader
1.5 Let Us Sum Up
1.6 Key Words
1.7 References and Further Readings

1.0 OBJECTIVES

Gandhi is widely recognized as the preeminent theorist of nonviolent civil disobedience, the leader of India's successful campaign for national independence and an architect of modern Indian self-identity. He never wrote a comprehensive and systematic political or philosophical work in the mode of Thomas Hobbes or Hegel, and the pamphlets and books he did write are extremely diverse in topic: they include criticisms of modern civilization, the place of religion in human life, the meaning of non-violence, social and economic programmes and even health issues. These works are constructed upon a series of concepts (*satyagraha*, *swaraj*, *sarvodaya*) which Gandhi elaborates into thematic strands. The Unit aims to throw some light on the unique context and the advent of Gandhi into a national leader.

The emergence of Gandhi played a pivotal role in the history of Indian Nationalism. He took the country by storm with his novel political ideologies centered on the cardinal principles of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha*. Armed with these ideological tools Gandhi shouldered critical responsibilities in the momentous events that finally led India to the path of freedom. The emergence of Gandhi, on the Indian political scenario was not the mere instance of another emerging new leader, but it was the rise of a whole new philosophy that permeated into every sphere of the Indian psyche. Gandhi's political ideals were merely an extension of his spiritual tenets, which were rooted in deep humanitarian values. Gandhi's greatness lies not only within pioneering a unique fervor in Indian politics and the rise of the masses, but in the way he revolutionized the entire way of looking at politics as an extension of mankind's inherent greatness, enriched with an innate belief in and commitment to truth. No wonder, he is revered as the Mahatma and has been immortalized as The Father of the Nation.

Thus by the end of the Unit you should have a fair idea of,

- context and emergence of the phenomenon of Gandhi and his philosophy;
- reading Gandhi with the complex nuances his work deserves.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

India's freedom struggle is a long and fascinating story. It is unique in the sense that it did not descend suddenly or abruptly like a bolt from the blue, but it matured and took shape in the womb of time for more than a century. Its revolutionary character consisted not in the quantity of bloodshed, but in the quality of the changes it brought about in the political system the socio-economic order of India. It was not a bloody revolution, but a peaceful one carried out with the unique Gandhian weapons of '*Satyagraha*' and 'Non-violence'. It was basically an ideological conflict between the emerging Indian Nationalism and entrenched British Imperialism. Its uniqueness is to be seen in the fact that the Indian National Congress which spearheaded the revolt against the British Imperialism was not a mere political party in any ordinary sense of the term, but it was a national liberation movement. As such it was able to inspire and attract different groups of people with diverse, even conflicting, interests and forge a united front to fight for the liberation of India from the yoke of the oppressive colonial rule. Thus the Indian National Movement provided a common platform for all the freedom fighters irrespective of their race, religion, caste, class, region, language and sex.

Gandhi appeared on the political firmament of India and imparted a new momentum to the nationalist movement. Jawarharlal Nehru has described the advent of Mahatma Gandhi in his inimitable dramatic style in his book "Discovery of India", he says, " and then Gandhi came. He was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breaths; like a beam of light that pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our eyes; like a whirlwind that upset many things, but most of all the working of people's minds". Gandhi's rise in Indian politics gave a new hope to the people. He filled the leadership void and dominated the Indian National Congress for about three decades until India's independence was won. He imparted to the great national organization a new dynamic spirituality for combat, which he produced by rediscovering the long forgotten strings of the Indian genius , and effecting a synthesis between the ancient civilization of India and modern western civilization. Under his dynamic and inspiring leadership, the masses of India stirred themselves and plunged into the nationalist movement. His identification with the common people of India in terms of their poverty, frugal lifestyle, culture, language and religious beliefs and practices as well as their dreams and aspirations for human dignity and good life was so complete, sincere and authentic that even the most stubborn and obstinate among them found it difficult to resist his call to join the non-violent struggle for the liberation of India from foreign rule. The non-violent non-cooperation movement launched and directed by him makes a fascinating story.

1.2 CONTEXT

The development of Indian Nationalism occurred in three separate phases. The phase of moderates and the phase of radicals, It was the third phase of Indian Nationalism that witnessed the rise of M.K.Gandhi. Let us have a brief look at moderate phase and the phase of radicals before coming to Gandhi.

Moderates: The early nationalist leaders believed that a direct struggle for the political emancipation of the country was not yet on the agenda of history. What was on the agenda was the arousal of national feeling, consolidation of this feeling, the bringing of a large number of Indians into the vortex of nationalist politics and their training in politics and political agitation. The first important task was the creation of public interest in political questions and the organization of public opinion in the country. Secondly popular demands had to be formulated on a country-wide basis so that the emerging public opinion might have an all- India focus. Most important of all, national unity had to be created, in the first instance, among the politically conscious Indians and political workers and leaders. The early national leaders were fully aware of the fact that India had just entered the process of becoming a nation. Indians had to be carefully welded into a nation. Politically conscious Indians had to constantly work for the development and the consolidation of the feeling of national unity irrespective of religion, caste or region.

The Indian national movement up to 1905 was dominated by moderate leaders. They started constitutional agitation within the four walls of law. They believed that if public opinion was created and organized and popular demands presented to the authorities through petitions, meetings, resolutions and speeches, the authorities would concede these demands gradually and step by step. Their political work had a two- pronged direction. Firstly, to build up a strong public opinion in India to arouse the political consciousness and national spirit of the people. Secondly, the early nationalists wanted to persuade the British Government and British public opinion to introduce reforms along directions laid down by the nationalists. The moderates were never resorted to rebellion, aiding or abetting a foreign invasion or resort to crime.

The nationalists criticized the official policies for bringing about the ruin of India’s traditional economic policies for bringing about the ruin of India’s traditional handicraft industries and for obstructing the development of modern industries. They complained that India’s wealth was being drained to England, and demanded that the drain be stopped. They carried on persistent agitation for the reduction of land revenue in order to lighten the burden of taxation on the peasant. They declared that high taxation to be one of the causes of India’s growing poverty and demanded the abolition of the salt tax. The nationalists agitated for the improvement in the conditions of work of the plantations. Dadabhai Naoroji declared that the British rule was “an everlasting, increasing, and every day increasing foreign invasion”.

The basic weakness of the early national movement lay in its narrow social base. It did not penetrate down to the masses. In fact, the leaders lacked faith in the masses. Describing the difficulties in the way of organizing of active political struggle, Gopal Krishna Gokhale pointed to the endless divisions and subdivisions in the country, the bulk of the population ignorant and clinging with a tenacity to the old modes of thought and sentiment, which are averse to all changes and do not understand change.

Radicals: After 1905, nationalist movement entered the second phase during that period, one in which Indian nationalists grew more vocal and radical in their demands. Boycott, resistances and demonstrations were their political weapons. They came to be known as the Radicals. Some famous Radical leaders were Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal.

The conditions for the emergence of radical nationalism had thus developed when in 1905 the partition of Bengal was announced and the Indian national movement entered its second phase. On 20 July 1905, Lord Curzon issued an order dividing the province of Bengal into parts: Eastern Bengal and Assam with a population of 31 million and the rest of Bengal with a population of 54 million consisting of Bengalees, Biharis and Oriyas. The official reason given for the decision was that Bengal was too big to be administrated properly. However the real motive behind the partition plan was the British desire to weaken the nerve centre of Indian nationalism- Bengal, on communal grounds by creating a wedge between the Hindus and Muslims. The Indian National Congress and the nationalists of Bengal firmly opposed the partition. To make their protest more powerful the *Swadeshi* and Boycott movement was launched.

Swaraj for the radicals meant "complete freedom from foreign control and full independence to manage national affairs without any foreign restraints. They hated foreign rule and had no faith in the benevolence of the British public or Parliament. They had deep faith in the strength of the masses and they planned to achieve *Swaraj* through mass action. They, therefore, pressed for political work among the masses and for direct political action by the masses. The radicals also affirmed their faith in passive resistance, mass agitation and strong will to suffer or make self-sacrifices. The radicals advocated boycott of the foreign goods, use of *swadeshi* goods, national education and passive resistance. However, the influence of radicals was curtailed as the British Government played the game of 'Divide and Rule'. While suppressing the radicals, it tried to win over moderate nationalist opinion so that the militant nationalists could be isolated and suppressed.

Reconciling both these strands emerged the Gandhian phase, the third phase of national movement. Gandhi launched and encouraged protest of Government, boycott, *Swadeshi* a mass movement of non-cooperation. All these awakened the masses under his leadership for the first time on such a wide scale. This resulted in active involvement of people on national movement. He reigns in the hearts of millions of Indians as The Father of the Nation, for the path breaking role that he played not in the Indian struggle for independence but for moulding the national character and the lives of the Indians alike. At a time when the fabric of the Indian society was tearing apart, he accomplished the herculean task of unifying the nation. Confronted with diverse political ideologies like hard line extremism, the moderate approach and the newly emerging communist forces the confused Indians found solace in the simple philosophies of Gandhi. He worked assiduously for the upliftment of the downtrodden like the dalits and gave them a new identity. Women, under his aegis, found back their long lost confidence and actively participated in the tasks of national cause. Gandhi with similar perseverance championed the cause of the secularism. As a visionary, he realized right at the onset that the real strength of India lies in communal harmony and brotherhood.

1.3 GANDHI IN THE INDIAN POLITICAL ARENA

Gandhi returned to India in January 1915. During the first year after his arrival, Gandhi did not take a public stand on any political issue because he did not want a plunge into Indian politics until he equipped himself with first-hand knowledge of the conditions in India. Therefore, in accordance with the advice of his 'political guru', Gopal Krishna Gokhale, he undertook a countrywide tour, giving as much as he received in the form of political education. This study tour took him to *Shantiniketan* where he met Rabindranath Tagore. Very soon, his name became as well known throughout India as the architect of *Satyagraha* Movement against racism in South Africa and requests started coming from various parts of the country that he should visit their place and help the people there in solving some of their local problems. Before embarking on the study tour, Gandhi had established the *Satyagraha* Ashram on the banks of the Sabarmati at Ahmedabad in 1916 where the families which had lived at the phoenix Settlement joined him to live together as a community committed to profess, practice and propagate the message, values and disciplines of Satyagraha. Besides these, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Mahadev Desai, Acharya Kaka Kalelkar, Kishorelal Mashruwala and J C Kumarappa, Miss. Amtul Salam and Miss. Madeline Slade from England who later took the name of Mira Ben, also joined this Ashram as inmates.

It so happened that this year of enforced silence ended early 1916 at the time of founding of Benaras Hindu University. Pandit Madan Mohan Malavya, the founder of the university had arranged a series of lectures to be delivered by eminent persons who had come for the occasion after the foundation-stone had been laid by the then Viceroy, Lord Hardinge. It was Mahatma Gandhi's turn one evening, which was the first time that he spoke in public since his arrival in the country a year ago. Big leaders, English Officers, Rajas and Maharajas were present. Wearing a turban, the future Mahatma was looking like a peasant. As he started to speak, it appeared, as if Mother India was beginning to unfold her long suppressed tales of woe. Asserting that the poor of India were being exploited, he explained how the money for the jewels worn by Rajas and Maharajas was earned by them by sucking the blood of the poor. Ridiculing them for their women-like jest for ornaments, he advised them to sell their jewels and utilize the proceeds for the well-being of the poor. He made similar observations about the capitalists. At last he opened a scathing attack on the English as having started the exploitation of the poor. As some among the audience shouted, "Gandhiji, go on, Gandhiji, go on", the Englishmen, the Rajas and the Maharajas, the Rai Bahadurs and the Khan Bahadurs, all vacated their chairs and walked away. But Gandhi went on. At last the Maharaja of Darbhanga, a pillar of the British Empire, who was presiding, also left. As the chairs became empty, Gandhi a firm believer in discipline, despite the request of some of the audience to continue, concluded his speech. It acted, however, as an indication of what was to come.

Later in 1916, Mahatma Gandhi attended the Annual Session of the Congress held at Lucknow. This session, presided over by Ambika Charan Majumdar, was unique in many respects. It saw the re-uniting of the radical and moderate groups. It also brought about an understanding between the Muslim League and Congress for joint fight and drew up a Constitution for the Congress which had been without any during the last 30 years of its existence. However, by this time Gandhi had been able to enter into many hearts and reserve a special place for himself there. He had also become able to earn the title 'Mahatma'. All round the *pandal* where the Subjects Committee meeting of the Congress was being held, there was constant shouting of "Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai". In this Congress Session, some persons from Bihar met Gandhi and spoke to him about the hardships the workers were suffering at the hands of British indigo planters. Gandhi gave voice to the cause of the oppressed cultivators in Champaran district of Bihar who were suffering under tyranny of the European indigo-planters.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Compare and contrast Moderates and Radicals?

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………….

2) Did South Africa experience helped in advent of Gandhi?

…………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………...

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

1.4 EMERGENCE AS AN ALL INDIA LEADER

Gandhi turned his attention to the grievances of the cultivators oppressed by the indigo planters in Champaran. But the District Magistrate served on him an order to leave the district immediately. Gandhi refused to obey the order and was tried for defiance. He pleaded guilty of disobeying the order, but he justified his action on the ground that human authority must yield before the higher authority of conscience. It was a new plea in a court of law. But not altogether so, for in the history, men like Socrates and religious saints and martyrs had taken this line to justify their action in the past. But for the British Magistrate who was utterly unused to such a procedure, the plea was staggering. His non-violent resistance provided a viable alternative in the struggle. The Champaran *satyagraha* forced the government to adopt the 1918 Champaran Agricultural Act, whereby those compelled to let their land for indigo cultivation were given some relief. What Gandhi left was carried forward by local peasants, with Champaran becoming a strong base for non-violent political mobilization, though the Congress leadership never allowed them to organize protests against the indigenous landlords. Despite the peasants' failure to lead movements against the vested interests, the Champaran *satyagraha* articulated the neglected voice of protests. Gandhi emerged as the supreme leader and non-violence gained salience. This was not a subaltern protest, but one in which the subalterns were inducted into the process of political mobilization. In other words, the Champaran *satyagraha* represented 'a battle in which many different levels of consciousness coexisted the complex perspective of the participants'. Apart from projecting Gandhi as a perfect mobilizer, this 1917 *satyagraha* also contributed to a unique multi-class political 'platform uniting the clearly antagonistic classes for the battle against foreign rule. Not only did Gandhi succeed in containing the class wrath within a specific limit, he also created a situation in which the struggle against the exploiters coincided with the challenge against colonialism. So Gandhian non-violence, as the Champaran *satyagraha* demonstrated, provided a potent means of legitimate and effective resistance within the new political dispensation in which the Congress was gaining in importance. The Champaran movement was a watershed in Gandhi's political life, not only in terms of conceptualizing *satyagraha* as a device but also in terms of its application to build a political platform regardless of class.

Similar to the Champaran experiment, the 1918 Kheda *satyagraha* was a Gandhi-led no-revenue campaign. Hard-hit by economic hardship due to the destruction of crops by rains, a rise in agricultural wages, the high rate of inflation and the outbreak of plague, the Patidar peasants organized a movement against the government's decision not to waive land revenue. Launched by Mohanlal Pandya and Shankarlal Parikh from a small town of Kathlal in the district of Kheda of Gujarat, the movement gained momentum as the Gujarat Sabha, an organization under the aegis of the Congress, extended support. Once approached by the Gujarat Sabha, Gandhi arrived in Kheda in March 1918 to launch a *satyagraha* campaign against the government decision to confiscate the properties of defaulters. The campaign lasted for four months and in June the government of Bombay decided not to Implement the order, sparing the peasants who failed to pay the revenue. Like the Champaran *satyagraha,* the movement, spearheaded by local Congress activists, continued with local support. Gandhi's presence was more symbolical than anything else. Even his lieutenants, Vallabhbhai and Vitthalbhai Patel, remained insignificant in the entire movement, in which the local leaders became most important. As a cementing factor, Gandhi brought the *satyagrahees* together for the movement that had an agenda set by the local leaders in their own terms. In other words, Gandhi was important in the Kheda *satyagraha* so long as he agreed to support the demands of local leaders. This was evident when Gandhi urged the villagers to join the British army during the First World War and they refused.

During the Kheda *satyagraha*, Gandhi also participated in the Ahmedabad textile mill strike of February-March 1918. This was a different kind of experiment involving the workers. The successful campaign in Champaran had catapulted Gandhi to the centre-stage. When the workers in Ahmedabad became restive, Gandhi was invited by Anusuyya Sarabhai, a social worker who happened to be the sister of Ambalal Sarabhai, the president of the Ahmedabad Mill Owners' Association, to intervene and resolve the crisis. What triggered the strike was the withdrawal of 'plague-bonus' to the workers. Equivalent in some cases to 80 per cent of the wages, this was paid to dissuade the workers from fleeing the plague-ravaged towns. Once the epidemic was over, the mill-owners decided to discontinue the practice. This decision affected the workers adversely simply because of the spiraling price rise due to the outbreak of war.

Drawing on his belief that there was no major contradiction between capital and labour, Gandhi sought to defuse the crisis through dialogues with the mill-owners. The mill-owners appeared to be adamant and characterized Gandhi's intervention as 'unwarranted'. On 22 February, 1918, the mill-owners locked out the weavers despite Gandhi's repeated requests. With the closure, Gandhi decided to champion the workers' demand though he asked them to tone down their earlier demand for a 50 per cent wage increase to 35 percent. Although the workers agreed to Gandhi's suggestion, the mill-owners did not relent and workers seemed to lose morale. It was at this juncture that Gandhi began the 'first' of his seventeen 'fasts unto death' on 15 March, 1918. This three-day fast appears to have forced the mill-owners, who deeply respected Gandhi, to come to an agreement with the striking workers. As per the agreement, suggested by the arbitration board, the workers demand was partially fulfilled because they got a 27.5 per cent wage hike instead of their revised demand for a 35 per cent increase. So the compromise formula 'looked like a face-saving formula and a tactical defeat for Gandhi'26 though he forced the mill-owners to accept the principle of arbitration in which workers' representatives had a say along with the employers.

A unique event in Gandhi's political life, the Ahmedabad strike added a new chapter to the history of the Indian nationalist movement. Though critical of Gandhi's obsession with passive resistance, *The Bombay Chronicle* appreciated the principle of arbitration as a turning point in labour employer relations in Ahmedabad in particular and a unique *system* of resolving industrial disputes in general. Similarly, *The Times* criticized Gandhi for blackmailing the mill-owners who happened to be his admirers by his fast unto death, though it hailed his role in articulating arbitration as an effective device to break the *impasse* between the workers and industrialists.

These three movements projected Gandhi as an emerging leader with different kinds of mobilizing tactics. What was common in all these movements was the fact that a) they were organized around local issues; and b) in mobilizing the people for the movements, the importance of the local leaders cannot be underestimated. There is no doubt that Gandhi's appearance on the scene gave a fillip to these movements. Yet, if we carefully chart the movements, we will discover that' Gandhi was invited to lead when support was adequately mobilized by the local organizers. By his involvement with these movements at a stage when they struck roots in the concerned localities, Gandhi projected a specific kind of leadership: he

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

was not a primary but a secondary organizer. There is no doubt that the movements gained different heights with his intervention. The masses interpreted Gandhi's message in their own terms and rumours surrounding the powers of this messianic leader served to break the barriers of fear involved in confronting formidable enemies. As evident in Champaran and Kheda, Gandhian intervention in elite nationalist politics established for the first time that an authentic nationalist movement could be built upon the organized support of the peasantry, though its political object was not one which Gandhi endorsed. The peasants were meant to become willing participants in a struggle wholly conceived and directed by others, with Gandhi providing a national framework of politics in which peasants are mobilized but do not participate in its formulation. This was also true of the Ahmedabad strike where Gandhi accommodated the interests of the mill-owners even at the cost of the workers since their demand was partially conceded. Based on his belief that capital and labour were not contradictory to each other, Gandhi agreed to the negotiated settlements as probably the best solution under the circumstances. Workers failed to get what they had asked for. Yet Gandhi's role was most significant in articulating a form of political mobilization in which the workers were also decisive. Just like the Champaran and Kheda *satyagrahas* that extended the constituencies of nationalist politics by incorporating the peasantry, the Ahmedabad textile strike was a watershed, for it accorded a legitimate space to the workers in what was conceptualized as nationalism.

These three movements constitute a milestone in what Gandhi articulated as nationalist politics. A leader had emerged to radically alter the complexion of India's struggle for freedom. With his involvement in mass movements in Champaran, Kheda and Ahmedabad, Gandhi forged a new language of protests for India by both building on older forms of resistance while at the same time accepting the colonial censure of all forms of violent protest. Two complementary processes seem to have been at work: at one level, local issues obviously played a significant role in mobilizing the masses for protest movements in the localities; at another, the presence of Gandhi at a critical juncture helped sustain these movements as they were perhaps losing momentum due to the growing frustration of the local organizers. So Gandhi was a missing link that not only galvanized the masses into action but also contributed immensely to the successful conclusion of these protest movements in Champaran, Kheda and Ahmedabad involving completely different constituencies of nationalist politics, namely, peasantry and labour. These movements appear to have set the tone and tenor for future movements which Gandhi was to lead, with the people at large participating in response to his call for political action. Although he was a secondary organizer in all these movements, he appeared to carry with him a magic wand that not only activated those who remained peripheral but also sustained the momentum of the movements despite odds. He emerged as a mass leader who felt the pulse of the people perhaps more accurately than anybody else during the freedom struggle. And the consequence was obvious because it was Gandhi who transformed the struggle for freedom to a wider nationalist campaign involving various categories of people including those who usually remained detached.

Gandhi led three major pan-Indian movements. The 1919-21 Non-Cooperation Movement was the first one that gained significantly, with the merger of the Khilafat agitation of the Muslims against the dismantling of the Khalif in Turkey. The Civil Disobedience Movement was an all-

India movement in which Gandhi reigned supreme. Basically a salt *satyagraha*, the Civil Disobedience campaign manifested differently in different parts of India. The 1942 Quit India Movement, also known as the open rebellion, was the last of the three pan-Indian campaigns spearheaded by Gandhi. Like the earlier anti-British nationalist offensives, the Quit India Movement was not uniform in its nature throughout the country, and yet masses drew on Gandhi and his ideas while zealously participating in what was proclaimed to be the final battle with the colonial rule. Although these movements were organized in different phases of India's nationalist struggle, two features that recurred in all these instances of mass mobilization are as follows: first, Gandhi remained the undisputed leader who appeared to have swayed masses with his charisma and magical power; and second, despite their pan-Indian characteristics, these movements were independently organized by the participants, drawing on local grievances both against the rural vested interests and the government for supporting them. As examples from rural Bengal show, the message of the Mahatma was decoded completely differently by the people during the Quit India Movement. On occasions, they even justified violence in the name of the Mahatma. This was what was unique in Gandhi, who succeeded in infusing a mass zeal for participation in the freedom struggle in contrast with the past when the nationalist movement was narrowly conceptualized and participation was therefore highly restricted.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What are the unique features of Gandhi's movements?

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………….

2) Reflect on the factors that contributed to the making of Mahatma.

…………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………...

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

1.5 LET US SUM UP

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

Gandhi was the consummate problematizer of conventional ideas about human society. His creative intervention sparked off new debates on relevant issues involving other leading personalities holding similar/dissimilar views. For instance, instead of insisting only on political independence from colonial rule, he devoted a great deal of attention to purging Indian society of indigenous patterns of domination. Although he continuously drew upon the tradition while conceptualizing his ideas, he nonetheless challenged what he took to be its defects in order to reform it. So the importance of Gandhi's creative work lay precisely in seizing upon the fugitive and supplementary forms of everyday life and in infusing them which a rigorous anti-disciplinary discipline which allowed them to no longer be fugitive, It is this extraordinary ordinariness that makes Gandhi's socio-political ideas so astonishingly salient today.

Gandhi's social and political thought is multi-dimensional. If its kernel is derived from India's civilizational resources, its actual evolution was shaped by his experiences in South Africa and India. His political ideology was a radical departure from the past in the sense that it was neither the constitutional loyal ism of the Moderates nor the Extremism of the revolutionary terrorists. In his articulation of Indian nationalism, he sought to incorporate the emerging constituencies of nationalist politics that had remained peripheral in the bygone era. Gandhi brought about an era of mass policies, though he dismissed the role of the masses in the early part of the Non-Cooperation Movement as nothing but mobocracy. Gandhi knew India, and especially the Indian masses. He could merge, argued Jawaharlal Nehru, with the masses and feel with. them, and because they were conscious of this they gave him their devotion and loyalty. So, an analysis of the role of the Mahatma in India's freedom struggle clearly indicates the changing nature of the movement in response to the zealous participation of various sections of India's multicultural society. It was possible because Gandhi was perhaps the only effective nationalist leader who truly attempted to transcend the class conflicts by devising a method which, for the first time, brought about the national aggregation of an all-India character. This is where Gandhi was unique. Not only did he articulate the peripheral voices, he also translated them into action by linking with the obvious adverse consequences of colonialism.

1.6 KEY WORDS

Moderates: believed in petitioning and persuading British;

Radicals: sought to boycott and resist through direct actions.

1.7 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

Andrews, C. F. *Mahatma Gandhi at Work*. London: George and Unwin, 1931.

Argov, Daniel. *Moderates and Extremists in the Indian National Movement.* Bombay: 1968.

Azad, Maulana Abdul Kalam. *India Wins Freedom.* New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1988.

Chandra, Bipan. Et al. *India's Struggle for Independence.* New Delhi Penguin Books, 1989.

Chand, Tara. *History of the Freedom Movement in India.* 4 Vols. New Delhi: Publications Division, Government of India, 1983.

Chatterjee, Partha. *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Desai, A.R. *Recent Trends in Indian Nationalism,* Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1960

Mehrotra, S.R. *Emergence of Indian National Congress*, Delhi: 1971.

Namboodripad, E.M.S. *A History of Indian freedom Struggle*. Trivandrum: Social Scientist, 1986.

Nanda, B.R. *The Making of a Nation*. India: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998.

Nehru, Jawaharlal. *The Discovery of India.* New York: Oxford University Press, Centenary Edition, 1994.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

UNIT 2 GANDHI'S METAPHYSICAL WORLD-VIEW

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

Contents

2.0 Objectives
2.1 Introduction
2.2 Gandhi's Notion of Truth
2.3 Concept of God
2.4 Critical View
2.5 Let Us Sum Up
2.6 Key Words
2.7 References and Further Readings

2.0 OBJECTIVES

Gandhi considered himself to be a religious man and that it was his study of religions that led him from piety to ethics and from ethics to metaphysics. Gandhi imbibed a passion for truth and belief in God from the religious atmosphere of his family. At the early stages of his spiritual evolution s passion for truth was only an insistence on telling the truth and his belief in God was on1y theistic in nature. From theistic position where God is personal. Gandhi's attitude developed into a metaphysical position where God is 'The Eternal Principle' and 'the Universal Law'. His world-view is rooted in the fundamental metaphysical ideas. God (Truth), World and Man constitute his basic ontological principles. The Unit aims to understand Gandhi's world-view and the underlying metaphysical principles that shaped his out-look. Thus by the end of the Unit you should be able

- to know Gandhi's understanding of metaphysics;
- to understand the uniqueness of his multi-textured metaphysical concepts.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Gandhi's philosophy, which he called "an experiment with truth," was not a philosophy in which he merely interpreted or analyzed things for himself. It was an experience, or experiment, in which he changed himself and his environment. In the process, Gandhi re-oriented many traditional ideas practice. He said: "I do not claim to have originated any new principle. I have simply tried in my own way to apply eternal truths to our daily life and problem." He was an ordinary man who became a mahatma, a man of great soul. Gandhi said the eternal truths could be applied to daily life and problems. He said they were everywhere in history. He found that life persists amidst death and that there is compassion and friendliness amidst bitterness and hatred and persecution and war. Devotion to truth was the one characteristic of Gandhi. It was his greatest quality. Love of truth led him to all kinds of disciplines and experiments. He always began with smaller problems and applied the success he achieved to greater problems. "One step is enough for me" was his motto and he progressed from one step to another. The non-violent non-co-operation movement which won India's freedom was the outcome of the smaller success of his *satyagraha* or "passive resistance" in South Africa. India's freedom was, for him, a means to the larger problem of world peace. *Satyagraha* is a moral or spiritual struggle against political and economic domination which implies denial of truth. The reason is the colonial power in order to rule India takes the means of falsehood and manipulation. The struggle for freedom thus does not mean only to attain political and economic freedom but more importantly it is an upliftment of human conscience that lends to the nonviolent battle for the victory of truth. The concept of truth in Gandhi bears multiple meanings in view of the rich theoretical and practical dimensions. For Gandhi, truth is not only a metaphysical category but also a moral and spiritual concept signifying the importance of truth in life. We will look into the notion of truth and theoretically explicate some of the connections it has with associated concepts like non-violence.

2.2 GANDHI'S NOTION OF TRUTH

While *ahimsa* by definition denotes activity and action, it is the way Gandhi develops his philosophy of temporal action, namely through an examination of truth, which makes his philosophical contribution decisive. As a result, our discussion becomes an exploration of Gandhi’s truth and its role in both the spiritual and temporal world. Studying Gandhi’s emphasis on worldly existence is significant insofar as his philosophy is one that engages action. It is through the practice of *ahimsa* – the practice of Truth - that one realizes Truth.

Gandhi most often places truth and non-violence on the same level and claims that truth and non-violence are the two sides of the same coin. He is of the opinion that a truthful man is bound to be non-violent and vice versa. That is why it is supposed that truth and non-violence cannot be kept apart. However, one can see the difference between the two principles in morality. While truth is the bed-rock principle, non-violence follows as a corollary. All forms of non-violent behaviour follow from the one adhering to truth as a deep moral commitment. A *satyagrahi* is necessarily nonviolent because he contradicts himself if he is not so. This necessary relation between truth and non-violence need not commit Gandhi to the identity of the two. A non-violent person is in better position to realize truth as the supreme value.

Truth qualifies to be a moral law in view of the fact that it shows how moral values are possible at all. The presupposition of truth as the fundamental moral principle makes it into a moral law in the sense that truth prevails as the principle of good life in the world. Truth has the character of the Kantian categorical imperative because it demands absolute obligation from the truth-seeker. Truth acts as the moral law which is absolutely imposed on the truth-seeker by moral reason or the "inner voice”.

Truth is God

Gandhi equates truth with God keeping in view the primacy of truth as an ontological category. He says: truth is God, rather than God is truth. This formulation speaks of the fundamental change that has occurred in Gandhi's concept of God. That also speaks of his approach to religion and metaphysics. The ideas of truth-based religion and truth-based metaphysics dominate Gandhi's philosophy. The following implications are entailed by the formulation "Truth is God":

1. Truth has a spiritual dimension in addition to the moral dimension.
2. Truth is a metaphysical category as it characterizes the fundamental nature of reality.
3. Truth is the Absolute Reality which is the source of all existence.

Thus Gandhi makes it clear that truth has a transcendental significance in his metaphysical system in view of the all-comprehensive character of this concept. Truth does not have a partial presence because; if partial it amounts to a distortion of itself. Truth cannot be domain-specific, nor can it be confined to any particular discourse. Those who argue for the discourse dependence of truth do not understand the deeply absolute character of truth. Thus Gandhi emphasizes this point by showing that truth is God or the Absolute Reality.

The concept God signifies the Absolute Reality that cannot be subsumed under any other Reality. This leads to the idea that God is the ultimate ground of all existence. Gandhi makes his concept of God theology-free in order to get rid of the attempt to absorb it to any particular theological tradition. Gandhi's God is free from the theological frameworks which relativise God to their particular conceptions. Gandhi writes: “The word *satya* comes from *sat*, which means ' to be', 'to exist'. Only God is ever the same through all time. A thousand times honour to him who has succeeded, through love and devotion for *satya*, in opening out his heart permanently to its presence. I have been but striving to serve that truth”. Thus Gandhi gives absolute status to truth keeping in mind his predilection towards equating truth with God. This makes truth a metaphysical reality more than the moral law.

Gandhi uses the term truth in two ways, namely truth as Absolute Truth, and truth as relative truth. While the significance of Gandhi’s use of the term Truth reflects the importance of the term in many Indian philosophical and religious traditions, the distinction between Absolute Truth and relative truths is most succinctly described through the Buddhist paradigm of truth.

The Buddhist understanding of truth broadly differentiates between the Absolute Truth that is the transcendent truth, and the conditional truth that relies on the Absolute Truth. Both these forms of truth include factual and scientific truths. However, Gandhi understands and application of truth in formulating his philosophy is primarily concerned with morality and social relations.

Absolute Truth

Absolute Truth is characterized by its fixed and unalterable nature. For Gandhi, Absolute Truth (hereafter Truth) is the only fundamental truth. He uses the term interchangeably with God and maintains “beyond truths there is one absolute Truth which is total and all embracing. But it is indescribable because it is God. Or say, rather, God is Truth”. He later updated this idea, arguing “… it is more correct to say that Truth is God than to say that God is Truth”. ‘Truth’ understood as ‘God’ is in some ways a pragmatic word choice for Gandhi. This pragmatism comes from the need to effectively communicate in a language that is understood by the many. His faith and devotion to his religion, together with the religions he studied, informed his interpretation of Truth to an overwhelming degree. Gandhi went so far to insist “I can live only by having faith in God. My definition of God must always be kept in mind. For me there is no other God than Truth; Truth is God”. As a term, then, God becomes an embodiment of the idea of Truth. If God is accepted as an external force or agent, with an omniscient role in the entire cosmos, the use of the title is effective. If, however, God is understood in a physical form or even as the divine creator of destinies, the descriptor does not capture that which Gandhi is attempting to illustrate.

Yet God is not the only characteristic Gandhi assigns to Truth. He also equates Love to Truth. That is to say, in describing Love, Gandhi combines the working definitions of love with the negative and positive elements of *ahimsa* insofar as integration of the responsibility of self and communal realisation is necessary for the realisation of Truth. Love for the self is as significant as love for the other and for the community as a whole. Indeed the realisation of Truth demands the realisation of all three entities. Gandhi’s choice of the term “love” is interesting because of its intensity. Rather than discussing, care or responsibility, which are open to interpretation of scope and passion, love denotes a very particular, albeit indefinite, depth and zeal that incorporates near extreme elements of care and responsibility.

Truth as Love underscores the all- embracing nature of Absolute Truth. Hence, Gandhi does not define Truth. The terms God and Love are too broad to be seen as “defining” terms. In part Gandhi uses these terms to ensure there are no boundaries to Truth. That is he does not consign limits to Truth, and therefore he does not claim to have discovered a universal absolute. As a result, Gandhi further argues that Truth can never be realized. At the same time, Gandhi has provided us with the qualities of Truth and, therefore, a path for its achievement. Given Gandhi’s belief in the Indian conception of *moksha*, the spiritual release as the supreme end of life, and in the relationship of Truth to God, the realisation of Truth is a significant piece of Gandhi’s puzzle. He supports the claim that Truth is unattainable partially through his religious beliefs. Because Gandhi insists that there cannot be a complete transcendence of desires and pleasures as long as we are in our physical form, it becomes impossible to understand Truth completely. The limitations of the physical form denote the importance of *moksha*. Gandhi insists that a person comes closer to Truth as s/he controls her/his passions. Yet the limitations of the physical form deny a person complete transcendence from violence. While confined to our physical form and living in the elements of existence it is impossible for us to know Truth fully. The implication of the unattainability of Truth is that *ahimsa* also becomes impossible to practice in its entirety, as complete transcendence of desires and pleasures is impossible.

Hence, Gandhi establishes Truth as a guiding principle in our existence as it provides principles to spiritual, emotional and active elements of “this-worldly” life. Truth’s all- embracing nature is best articulated through an understanding of the use of Truth in Indian languages. “The word

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

satya (truth) comes from *sat* which means “to be” or “to exist.” To live through Truth is “to be” or “to exist” in wholeness.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

Relative Truth

The unattainability of Truth does not diminish its importance. Instead, Gandhi stresses the need for the use of relative truths to strive for Truth. Relative truths are those definitive ideas that provide guidance to our thoughts and actions, yet are not static. They change and morph to provide guidance in versatile situations. These truths maintain as their guiding principle the idea of Absolute Truth and, therefore, *ahimsa*.

Relative truths are describable and definable. It is the relationship of relative truth to Absolute Truth that is at the core of Gandhi’s argument. Relative truth becomes the form of truth that is attainable in the human condition or the temporal world. Truth characterized by God, Love, and *ahimsa* must be manifested through action in order to attain *moksha*. “He… who understands truth follows nothing but truth in thought, speech, and action, comes to know God and gains the seers vision of the past, present, and future.” Gandhi insists that there is no part of our lives that Truth cannot guide. The discussion of Absolute Truth and relative truth can also be seen as a discussion of means and ends insofar as relative truth is the means and Absolute Truth is the end.

This logic however, confronts yet another form of dichotomy whereby a mean cannot be an end in itself. Gandhi insists that this is not the case. The relationship of means and ends in Gandhi’s thought is most apparent through his insistence on characterizing Absolute Truth rather than defining it. His characterization is a means to the achievement of the end and an end in itself.

Hence, to make reference to means and ends as two distinct entities is somewhat incorrect. Truth understood solely as a means or as an end leaves the breadth of Gandhi’s *ahimsa* at the surface. The benefit of acting through *ahimsa* is retained for oneself. The existence of a better society and the realisation of *moksha* are not engaged. That is to say, one’s social responsibility is denied if Truth is treated as a means only. Truth understood as a means and an end implies that Truth is the means to defining relative truths and is also the ultimate end. Using the end as a guide for the means without diminishing its role as the ultimate end is the truest expression of *ahimsa*. As a means and an end, Truth engages the individual and the community insofar as it defines the individual and the community as a whole: it is that which allows one to see her/his community as an extension of her/himself.

Gandhi’s uses the term truth both as means and ends conterminously. *Ahimsa* is the means and Truth is the end. *Ahimsa* and Truth are so intertwined that is practically impossible to disentangle them. Means and ends work together in Gandhi’s paradigm for the realisation of Truth. This truth while it is ontologically absolute, it is also relative seen from the epistemic angle. This notion of relative is no concession to relativism. It is relative rather in relation to our ability to access it.

Gandhi's ideas on Truth allow people to interpret moral principles in a way that preserves the individual and embodies an understanding of the individual as a member of the community. Accepting this as Gandhi's understanding of the individual, Gandhi's Truth allows the individual to find the "best reasons" for acting in moral situations. As a result of Gandhi's understanding of the individual as embedded in community, autonomy is value-laden whereby both individuals and the community have the goal of realizing Truth. It is not merely individual autonomy. The concept of autonomy must incorporate idea of communal autonomy as it relates to individual autonomy when making moral judgments. This nuanced version of autonomy, which includes a characteristic of social responsibility, is not the only way in which Gandhi incorporates autonomy as a way of making moral judgments. As outlined above, Gandhi also ensures that individuals have the right to interpret, and act upon moral principles as they see fit. Truth without definition leaves itself without boundaries, open to inquiry, and encourages personal assessment. Even though Gandhi puts forth a notion of Truth that is to guide moral judgments, he does not confine the notion to how we must make judgments. Instead his notion of Truth seeks to provide a method for allowing his conception of the individual in a community, rather than an individual that stands alone, for determining his moral judgments. Gandhi's method of philosophical inquiry, namely praxis, inadvertently incorporates moral judgments. In fact, for Gandhi it is through actions in the public sphere that moral judgments manifest themselves. The deduction of moral judgments rests with an individual who is defined through her or his membership in the community, and underscores the social responsibility Gandhi's praxis demands.

Glyn Richards in *The Philosophy of Gandhi* correctly emphasizes Gandhi's metaphysical concept of Truth as key to understanding the theoretical and practical dimensions of his philosophy. His concept of Truth (*satya)* provides a rationale and coherence to his political theory and practice. Truth is an exploration and an adventure of engagement with the spiritual and moral and the political seen as a unity, the oneness of these was never in doubt for Gandhi.He frequently expressed his view of reality and of political truth in terms of the formulation "Truth is God" in his reflections on Truth; Gandhi expressed a personal preference for the Hindu impersonal formulations of the non-dualistic *Advaita Vedanta* with its view of the all-encompassing, spiritual Self as *Atman* and its identification of *Atman* with the impersonal absolute *Brahman*. Gandhi was also extremely flexible in his formulations of Truth, frequently referring to God, Rama, and many other personal and impersonal terms.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Reflect on the complexity of Gandhi's notion of Truth.

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………….

2) What are the implications of the formulation 'Truth is God' ?

……………………………………………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………...

…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

2.3 CONCEPT OF GOD

Gandhi is an apostle of ahimsa. The basic principle of life is based on Truth. He says, "I often describe my religion as religion of truth. We are sparks of Truth. The sum total of sparks is indescribable as-yet-unknown Truth, which is God." The bearing of this religion on social life is or has to be seen in one's daily social contact. To be true to such religion one has to lose oneself in continuous and continuing service of our life. Realization of Truth is impossible without a complete merging of oneself in an identification with this limitless ocean of life. Hence, for me, there is no escape from social service, there is no happiness on earth beyond or apart from it. Social service must be taken to include every department of life. In this scheme there is nothing low, nothing high. For all is one though we seem to be many.

God was the central fact of Gandhi's life. God was not a mere intellectual conception to him. "God to be God," he said, "must rule the heart and transform it." Gandhi's aspiration was to see God face to face. "To me God is Truth and Love, God is Ethics and morality. God is fearlessness. He is even the atheism of the atheist. He is a personal God to those who need His touch." When Gandhi successfully came out of the ordeal of his fast unto death in protest against the British Cabinet's award of separate electorates for untouchables, he wrote a note to the late Rev. C. F. Andrews at Cambridge, England. It ran thus: "Dearest Charlie, God is both indulgent and exacting."

God and Truth are convertible terms to Gandhi. The progress of his spiritual experience was a transition from "God is Truth" to "Truth is God." Denial of God we have known; denial of Truth we have not known, he said. He saw that the atheist and the skeptic in their passion for truth denied God. His ashram or hermitage was an abode for atheists and sceptics too. He said nobody has denied truth or can deny it, for "Truth is God." "Truth is God," he said and added: "I am being daily led nearer to It by constant prayer." Gandhi's spiritual experience cannot be limited by a formula.

For Gandhi, all religions have the same truth, or elements of the same truth. He called the creation of the world God's play or *maya*, but did not dismiss the world as an illusion or appearance. He did not believe that the world "is hopeless and cannot be saved." God is, to Gandhi, the all-pervasive Reality, immanent in man and in the world (but also transcendent). If God's creation hides Him it is for man to reveal Him or discover Him by his actions, by ahimsa or non-injury. "To find Truth as God, the only means is ahimsa." God is not "was" but "is." He distinguished between "the God of history" and "the God of life" or "the living God." He said to the missionaries: "do not then preach the God of history, but show Him as He lives today through you." This would, of course, apply to everybody who goes by mere tradition or history. Gandhi called his religion the Religion of Truth. This is the same as ahimsa or non-violence. "The bearing of this religion," he said, "is, or has to be seen, in one's daily social contact. To be true to such religion one has to lose oneself in continuous and continuing service of all life."

Gandhi says, 'God is life, He is the Supreme Good. God is truth and love', God is fearlessness. God is the source of Light and Life, and yet He is above and beyond all these. He is the most exciting personage in the world. Truth and Harmlessness constitute the essence of God. "God is that indefinable something which we all feel but which we do not know." "There is an indefinable mysterious power that pervades everything. I feel it, though I do not see it. It is this unseen power that makes itself felt and yet defies proof, because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. It transcends reason. But it is possible to reason out the existence of God to a limited extent." "I do not regard God as a person. Truth for me is God and God's Law and God are not different things. God is Law Himself. Therefore, it is impossible to conceive God as breaking the Law. He and His Law abide everywhere and govern everything."

He declares, "I do perceive that, whilst everything around me is ever-changing and ever-dying, there is underlying all that change, a living power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves and re-creates. That informing Power or Spirit is God." God is Truth-Knowledge-Bliss *(sat-chit-ananda)*. The word *'Satya'* (truth) is derived from "Sat' which means being. And nothing is or exists in reality except Truth. And where there is truth, there also is knowledge, pure knowledge. And where there is true knowledge, there is always bliss.

Gandhi looks upon God as an impersonal, omnipresent power or Spirit that pervades the Universe; and that is immanent in the human soul. He is Truth, Love and Bliss. He can neither be perceived nor grasped by the intellect., but He can be felt. He can be imperfectly grasped by the intuition which is direct realization. God is Truth and Love. He can be known only through love or non-violence. Means and ends are inseparable. They are convertible terms. God is the end. Therefore He can be known through truth and love or non-violence. "Truth is God. When you want to find Truth as God the only inevitable means Love, i.e., non-violence, and ultimately means and ends are convertible terms." God-realization is the Supreme end according to Gandhi. He says, "I believe in absolute oneness of God and therefore of humanity. Though we have many bodies we have but one soul. The rays of the sun are many through refraction. But they have the same source." "1 believe in *Advaita*. I believe in the essential unity of a man and for that matter of all lives." There is unity of life in all lives. There is unity of Spirit in all mankind. Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God and all his activities, social, political, religious have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. Gandhi says, "The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavor, simply because the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can be done by the service of all. I am a part and parcel of the whole, and I cannot find Him apart from humanity. My creed is service of God and therefore of humanity."

God-realization is the Highest Good. It can be attained through the realization of oneness of life or Spirit of all mankind and sentient creation. God can be realized through service of all mankind. Love and Ahimsa are the only means of God-realization. Purity is essential for realization of God. Gandhi says, "To see the universal and all pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. Identification with everything that lives is impossible without self-purification. God can never be realized by one who is not pure in heart." Perfect self-control depends upon God's grace. Absolute self-surrender to God is necessary for complete self-control including sex-restraint. Jesus Christ says, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. Thou shall love thy neighbour as thyself."

2.4 CRITICAL VIEW

Gandhi is not an academic philosopher. So he has not evolved a system of metaphysics on the firm foundation of philosophical reflection. There are elements of intuitionism, rationalism or asceticism, and eudaemonism in his metaphysical doctrine, which are not reduced to a coherent unity. But still his voice is that of a prophet in this age of darkness. He is a great religious and moral reformer and political leader. He is a major contributor to the achievement of India's freedom from the British rule. He is fittingly called Father of the Indian nation. He is a great humanist. Gandhi holds that man has the freedom of the will. He can choose between right and wrong. God has given a man freedom. Conscience is the voice of God in man. It intuitively apprehends Rightness wrongness of particular actions. In complex situations God reveals the Truth to us through the intuition of conscience. This is the element of Intuitionism.

Gandhi offers almost an ascetic doctrine of human life. Suppression of instincts and desires and living the life of pure reason constitute the moral life. Our wants should be reduced; our desires should be suppressed: pleasure should be shunned; perfect equanimity and stoical indifference to pleasure and pain should be cultivated. The life of fearless and uncompromising pursuit of Truth, regardless of consequences, is the highest ideal. Sex instinct should not be gratified except for procreation; it is an evil, and as such, should be eradicated. Violence or injury to others should be eschewed altogether. All these show that Gandhi's metaphysical doctrine contains elements of asceticism, rigourism, rationalism or moral purism, anti suffers from its defects.

Gandhi believes in the existence of God. God is the Supreme Good, Truth and Love. He is the moral governor. Finite spirits are sparks of infinite Truth or God. They can realize Truth of perfection by social service-by identifying themselves with the whole creation-mankind and sentient creation and realizing the oneness of life. Ahimsa or nonviolence in thought, word and deed, is the means to the realization of Truth. Ahimsa is love and good will and active service. The world is rational constituted. It is the sphere of spiritual and moral life, and not dead to values. This is the element of metaphysical eudaemonism in Gandhi's doctrine.

Truth and Ahimsa are the keystones of Gandhi's philosophy. Truth is God. Ahimsa is love. God is Love. Realization of Truth means realization of God. It is possible only through Ahimsa, non-violence or love. God can be realized through love and service of humanity. He makes too much of truth. He says, "God is Truth." But it is more correct to say, according to him, that "Truth is God". He does not clearly explain the meaning of the Infinite. Truth is the supreme good. His metaphysical doctrine is vague as to the nature and content of the Supreme Good. However, he should be credited for "de-theologizing" truth. This means the truth as

Gandhi sees is not appropriable by any religious denomination. It can be pointed out here that if Gandhi were to say, as he did earlier, that God is truth, then truth becomes denominational. It would then be easy to see truth as associated with the Semitic or the *Vedantic* or whatever else we have view of God. Each believer can see truth as one with his God. The de-theologized view of God is of quite some significance in the age we are living when all types of fundamentalist fanaticism are playing havoc with the fate of human kind. In the context of India, this view of God is farthest from that of *Hindutva*, the Indian version of religious fascism. Therefore Gandhi can say that *Iswar*, *Allah* are thy names. This is no figurative expression for Gandhi as most people seem to think. It can be suggested that there is deeper truth to it. The expression has an ontological status for Gandhi and therein lies its significance.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) In Gandhian framework, what are the salient features of God?

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………….

2) What critical issues can be raised with regard to Gandhi's Metaphysics?

…………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………...

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

2.5 LET US SUM UP

Gandhi's writings have an implicit theoretically well-grounded ontology, an ontology that is constituted by a conceptual structure of existence covering both the human and the cosmic. This in fact gives a clue to answer or understand everything Gandhi talks about; truth, reality, god, good, love, and so on. In the modern west, the affirmation of existence is always only cognitive and knowledge is also always rational. Given the prevalence of this view, anything that departs from this discursive norm tends to be treated as philosophically suspect. Much of philosophical knowledge arises in Gandhi through the immediacy of "experiment", experience and vision, which may not be "rational" in the Cartesian sense, a notion of reason in the way of scientific procedures. In Gandhian world-view everything is seen as interconnected. The relation of human reality with the cosmic reality is where, for Gandhi, metaphysics enters. Metaphysics is in this sense an orienting of the self in a particular way to this reality. That is how God can be equated with Truth and Truth with goodness and the moral requirements flow from this.

2.6 KEY WORDS

Truth: is not just an epistemic or theoretical-semantic issue as it is for the dominant modern western tradition but a multi-dimensional concept;

Truth is God: it de-theologizes Truth from the grip of religion and includes atheists also.

2.7 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

Datta, Dhirendra Mohan. *The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*. Madison: University Of Wisconsin Press, 1961.

Gandhi, M.K. *All Men are Brothers*, Krishna Kripalani. Ed. Paris: UNESCO, 1958.

Iyer, Raghavan. Ed. *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*. 3 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1987.

Margaret Chatterjee. *Gandhi's Religious Thought*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Richard, Glyn. *The Philosophy of Gandhi: A Study of his Basic Ideas*. London: Routledge 1995.

Parel, Anthony J. *Gandhi's Philosophy and the Quest for Harmony*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2006.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

UNIT 3 GANDHIAN UNDERSTANDING OF MAN

Contents

3.0 Objectives
3.1 Introduction
3.2 Human Nature
3.3 Philosophy of Man
3.4 Implications
3.5 Let Us Sum Up
3.6 Key Words
3.7 References and Further Readings

3.0. OBJECTIVES

The concept of human nature is of vital significance in any system of thought. In fact, it is the different views of human nature which are to a great extent responsible for different ethical and metaphysical systems. Gandhi's indictment of modern civilization, his view of politics and especially of social and individual ethics are firmly based upon his assumptions regarding human nature and his understanding of man. His theory of human nature was closely bound up with his views on God and religion. He had a very definite conviction about what man is in his essential nature and of what he becomes through a false view of himself, of what he should be and can become, and of his place in a law-governed cosmos. The cosmos was a well-coordinated whole whose various parts were all linked in a system of interdependence and mutual service. It consisted of different orders of being ranging from the material to the human, each governed by its own laws and standing in a complex relationship with the rest. Human beings were an integral part of the cosmos, and were tied to it by the deepest bonds. Gandhi considered all life sacred whether human or non-human, for non-human beings too were divine in nature and legitimate members of the cosmos.

The Unit aims to cover Gandhi's views on human nature and seeks

- to understand Gandhi's philosophy of man;
- to know his understanding of the essence of man.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Gandhi fought for the liberation of humanity, and particularly of his countrymen for almost five decades of his public life and in that period he had to deal with millions of people belonging to various social groups. This mass contact provided him with opportunities to study and discover as to how human nature actually expresses itself in day-to-day social life. He developed a very clear concept of self and of human nature which forms an integral part of his world-view.

Despite his belief in the 'consciously-divine', rational and sociable nature of man, he realized that its manifestation in social life often betrays its distinctive characteristics, that is, that there is an apparent gulf between God and man owing to the immersion of the latter's soul in ignorance. Because of this, he declared that man is an imperfect and a fallible being. He felt that man takes in vice far more readily than virtue. He believed that there is no human being in this world who is wholly good or wholly bad. The difference between human beings is after all a difference only in the degrees of virtues possessed by them and not the fundamental difference between the wholly good and the wholly evil as such. Human nature, he repeatedly asserted, will only find itself when it fully realizes that to be human it has to cease to be bestial or brutal. He claimed to be a fairly accurate student of human nature and "vivisector of my own failings. I have discovered that man is superior to the system he propounds." In his autobiography, he declared that the brute by nature knows no self-restraint, and man is man because he is capable of, and only in so far as he exercises, self-restraint. Elsewhere, he states that the duty of renunciation differentiates mankind from the beast. Man becomes great exactly in the degree in which he works for the welfare of his fellow men. The differences between men are merely those of degree, not of kind.

Gandhi never isolated man from society primarily because he finds no distinction between man and man. To him all men are equal because all men are divine. This serves as the fundamental principle of the essence of man from Gandhian perspective. That he wants a radical change in the society from the point of view of this fundamental principle of the essence of man is undeniable. When a society shares a conjoint, communicated and disciplined vision of man, the essence of man as a divine entity finds its positive avenue of exposure. As Gandhi embraces everyone in the society as his constant divine partner in the total efflorescence of man, he shows an altogether radical and different avenue of conquering social maladies like fanaticism, superstitions, hatred, ill-will, anger, fear, falsehood and so on by honoring the inner divine essence of man. That Truth, Goodness and Beauty must come out effective and victorious in man, because man alone knows how to overcome all constraints related to the advancement of humanism, is the *sine qua non* of the Gandhian philosophy of man.

An iconoclast in the concept of man and radical visionary, Gandhi shows the avenue of respecting woman and eliminating differences between men and women. He draws our attention to the invaluable words of Swami Vivekananda who regards and adores every man and woman as a brother and a sister and teaches the age-old Indian lesson of humanism in the right perspectives of respect and nobility. He strongly believed that the souls of mankind are one and inseparable. The absolute oneness of humanity also encouraged him to purify his imperfect soul along with the purification of all the souls of mankind, for he strongly believes in the struggling spirit in man to be divine in essence and excellence. The practical consequence of this awareness of the divinity of the individual is that it compels one to look upon other individuals as ends in themselves and not as means to serve the purpose of others. This ensures the dignity of the individual. In fact, human dignity is grounded in human divinity. As the human individual partakes of the divinity of God, Gandhi believed that man is inherently and basically good. This provides the master key to Gandhi's concept of human nature.

3.2 HUMAN NATURE

This 'wonderful piece of work, noble in reason and infinite in faculty', man, engaged the attention of Gandhi too. In fact, implicit in any world-view is the concept of self and human nature and Gandhi paid considerable attention to it. His autobiography is full of observations about the manifestations of human nature. Therein, we find him stating that " a man often succumbs to temptation"; that "Selfishness turns them blind". In *Harijan*, he says that "people find the easiest of things oftentimes to be the most difficult to follow"; that "we are all thieves"; that "listlessness is common to us all"; and that "Love of power is usual in man and it often only dies with his death". We also find him observing that habit gets mastery over men; that they "follow the authority of one man like sheep". Notwithstanding his pronouncements on the darker side of human nature, it should, however, not be construed that Gandhi was always confronted with the darker side of human nature, he did come across its purely moral expressions as well. Recording such reminiscences, he wrote that "man is both matter and spirit, each acting on and affecting the other"; that "however bitter a man might be, he is sure to come round if we bestow upon him pure love in thought, word and deed"; that "generally those who believe in taking a tooth for a tooth, after a time forgive one another and become friends"; and that somehow he was "able to draw the noblest in mankind" and that is what enabled him to maintain his "faith in God and human nature".

Gandhi continued to maintain that man possesses an inborn, though limited, capacity of correcting his mistakes and of cultivating his special virtues. He believed that human nature is-infinitely modifiable; that is, "it was also given to human beings to learn from the mistakes and not to repeat them". In other words, he thought that "there are chords in every human heart, If we only know how to strike the right chord, we bring out the music". In this connection it should be mentioned that, *Bhagavad Gita* had taught Gandhi that man can only strive to cultivate his special virtues, he cannot command results. Secondly, he believed that man's capacity to cultivate his special virtues is limited and that, therefore, his nature could not be changed "in a moment". In other words, he was not so naive as to think that men could be transformed overnight. Further, he recognized the role that circumstances play in moulding man's nature, though he could never be sure as to how far a man is free and how far a creature of circumstances.

His belief in the monistic doctrine of the metaphysical unity between God and man enabled him to describe the relationship between man and man as also divine. Believing that "all life in its essence is one", he declared that we are all children of the same God and that, therefore, potentially human nature is the same everywhere. This. is to say that soul is one in all and that its possibilities are the same for everyone. It is interesting to note, in this context, the metaphors of a tree and an ocean with which he often used to describe the divine equality of human beings. Employing the metaphor of a tree he once said: "We are all leaves of a majestic tree whose trunk cannot be shaken off its roots which are deep down in the bowels of the earth, The mightiest wind cannot move it". And, taking recourse to the metaphor of an ocean he stated that "No one has the capacity to judge God. We are drops in that limitless ocean of mercy". In his autobiography, he observed: "We are all tarred with the same brush, and are children of one and the same creator, and as such the divine powers within us are infinite". It was this belief that enabled him to declare Truth to be "a social virtue".

His recognition of "conscious-divinity" as the important feature led him to include the virtues of moral-progression, non-violence, and benevolence, Subscribing to the view that there is nothing in this world which is not subject to change he regarded human nature also to be dynamic, and not static. He declared that "Human nature either goes up or goes down". And, this virtue of moral progression, he thought, distinguishes man both from the God and the beast. He argued that for them the question of progression just does not arise, as God is already perfect and the beast is essentially dormant. Distinguishing man from God he observed that "No one can remain without eternal cycle unless it be God himself ". And about man's distinction from the beast he declared that "Progress is man's distinction, Man's alone, not beast's". This distinction enabled him to regard man as "a special creature of God, precisely to the extent that he is distinct from the rest of His creation".

Emphasizing the need for cultivation of virtues, he opined that striving alone can enable man to bridge the apparent gulf between God and man's soul and thereby, to realize his self (that is soul or *atman*). And Self-realization was regarded by him to be the only vocation of man's life, something which is absolutely desirable. In other words, he firmly believed that "that alone is worth-having or worth-cultivating which would enable us to realize our Maker and to feel that, after all on this earth we are merely sojourners". In *Harijan*, he insisted that "Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities; social, political, religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God." In other words, man is born in order to know his Maker and' he should live to that end. The natural course of man's evolution he, thus, thought is "From beast, through man, to God". Unlike the sages of India's great past who suggested the path of withdrawal from the struggles of social life, Gandhi suggested that the' only way through which man could attain the ultimate state of *Brahmanirvana* (self-realization) was the way of involvement in the struggles of social life, that is the way of the service of God's creation.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What are the important features of human nature?

……………………………………………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………….

2) Are all humans same in the Gandhian framework ?

……………………………………………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………...

……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

3.3 PHILOSOPHY OF MAN

Based on his metaphysical presuppositions, Gandhi believes in the essential goodness of man. This conviction that man is inherently good is so fundamental in Gandhian thinking that one may even say that Gandhi's entire attitude and approach to the questions related to life was based on this belief in the innate goodness of the human individual. The unique weapon of *satyagraha* and his revolutionary agenda for social transformation were all based on this belief. Although Gandhi put his implicit faith in the goodness of the individuals he was not unaware of the element of error and evil in him. With his deep insight into human nature Gandhi knew that just as there is the divine spark in man there is also the brute in him. Gandhi makes a distinction between the 'higher self' and the 'lower self' and at the *nadir* of the lower self he identifies the 'brute'. The very fact that man has a body brings in with it certain natural limitations which cannot be ignored or under estimated as insignificant. But one shall not identify man with his lower nature, nor shall the ideal of life be identified with the attainment of the needs of the body. Man, Gandhi contends. is a mixture of good and evil, and the upward and downward tendencies are inherent in him.

But as man is essentially good, goodness being his basic nature, Gandhi argues that man is also perfectible. "Godliness implies that it is more natural for man to be good than to be evil, though apparently descent may seem easier than ascent". This is the ground for Gandhi's optimism. Of course, to err is human but to try to overcome error is divine. "There is no one without faults, not even men of God", wrote Gandhi. They are men of God not because they are faultless but because they know their own faults and are ever ready to correct themselves. One hears in these words of Gandhi an echo of the famous saying that every saint has a past and every sinner a future. Man must choose either of the two courses; the upward or the downward but as he has the brute in him he will more easily choose the downward course than the upward, especially when the downward course is presented to him in a beautiful grab**.** Although the downward course is easier than the upward as we are born with brute strength, "we are born in order to realise God who dwells in us. That is the privilege of man, it distinguishes him from the brute creation"**.** He is more concerned with how to bring out the divinity that is already there in human nature. For this, Gandhi believed, human individuals have to be trained to extricate themselves from the pulls and pressures of the lower nature. He propounded a set of rules and vows for facilitating this upward impulse to perfect himself and to realise his ultimate end.

Entering deep into the genesis of man, Gandhi believes that the inner worth of mankind lies not by exhibition of external force but by silent and struggling endeavor to rise to the ascent and excellence of man the unknown. The striving for perfection is, therefore, one of the inner adventure always thrilling, pulsating and poignant. The concept of man in relation to the society as Gandhi formulates has no parallel in the contemporary times. He says, " I value individual freedom but you must not forget that man is essentially a social being. He has risen to his present status by learning to adjust his individualism to the requirements of social progress. Unrestricted individualism is the law of the beast of the jungle. we have learnt to strike the mean between individual freedom and social restraint" (*Harijan*, 1927). A perfect synchronization between man and society is the fundamental requisite to the march of man and society as a living and dynamic force of civilization. Man marches ahead not because he excels in scientific marvels or in utilitarianism but he continually makes an adventure for inward excellence. This inward excellence always encompasses everyone in and around him. He forsakes himself for others in and around him to be nearer to himself by embracing all. The more he is dedicated to this mission for self-sacrifice, the greater is the possibility of better efflorescence of the vision of man within him. In fact, he is reborn with this vision that promises him to be an ideal partner and sympathizer of the society to which he belongs. Society, then, becomes an indispensable part of his very being,-the existence, worth and fullness of man.

Side by side with socialization as the essence and excellence of man, Gandhi reminds man of cultivating the true spirit of religion which guides and directs man towards the avenue of purity and perfection. This true spirit of religion can be exercised through prayer. Only a prayerful heart, as he ardently believes, can make a bridge between man and man. It should be the 'vital concern' of every human being who cares for discipline and orderliness. Gandhi is concerned more with the excellence of man than with customs, principles, rites and rituals which serve as mandatory components of one's so-called religion. That man is the only essence of religion and divinity is the radical approach to religion which he time and again highlights in the vision of man and religion. Moreover, he emphasizes on environment of oneself by means of exercise of the nobler qualities that contribute to the excellence of man and his religion. These are love, truth and non-violence in particular. Love as Gandhi considers, truly reveals man as man. The essence of man is the essence of love. Bereft of the inner spirit of love, man degrades himself down to the level of an animal. An ardent optimist in the fullness of man, he awaits better days of purer efflorescence of man.

The quest for Truth is the quest for the inner essence of man. If is the quest that calls forth means for synchronization between Truth and non-violence. As the core of religion is prayer, so is Truth that constitutes the highest and noblest prayer that leads to the harmonized essence of Truth and Ahimsa. And as prayer is the core of the lift of man so is his endeavor at making a fusion between Truth and Ahimsa that becomes a part and parcel of the essence of man. Gandhi banks upon Ahimsa essentially because it is a means--a very effective means which shakes hands with Truth, the end or the goal of man. To arrive at this goal, one must, as Gandhi emphasizes, continually strive even in the face of repeated failures. He is more interested in visualizing God in the quest for Truth than in anything else, and so, he takes recourse to Ahimsa which serves as a certain and definite means for Truth.

When Gandhi advocates for cultivation of Truth as the essence of man, he also advocates for practice of patience. The lesson learnt through cultivation of patience is the lesson of love and mutual understanding between man and man. Therein lies the fountain of greatness that leads man towards unison with Truth. To be baptised with the spirit of patience is to be baptised with the training of how to purify oneself amidst sorrows and sufferings, obstacles and constraints. The path of Ahimsa is, therefore, the path of patience and suffering, the path of continual crystallization for whatever is good for mankind.

For adherence to true idealism which conforms to the practical and living aspects of religion, Gandhi makes inroads to the concept of inwardness in man. This means that man must strive hard to be worthy of an ideal which has its close alliance with Truth. He allows man to keep open the doors of consciousness in order to celebrate the essence of religion in idealism not in a narrow compass but in a wider context of the religion of boundlessness. To orient oneself with this spirit of idealism is to orient one's faith in religion in the right perspective of perfection. Herein lies the virtue of an ideal that coordinates religion in the spirit of boundlessness. Otherwise, man becomes a victim to imperfection and parochialism. What, therefore, contributes to the excellence of man is the continual assessment of an ideal he so enriches on or sticks to it for crystallization.

Gandhi is aware of crystallization further beyond man by means of aesthetics. This means that in the process of continual advancement, man must practice the aesthetics of Truth, Goodness and Beauty. A continual process of refinement of sensibilities will allow him to see into the purity and perfection of everything in which he is involved. He cannot, therefore, but evaluate himself in terms of Goodness awaiting better exploration and identification with Truth and Beauty. The aesthetics of soul-force as Gandhi visualizes in his concept of non-violence forewarns man against demolishing conscience which hinders him from being led astray. It is also an acid test for every person in the face of violence, when the aesthetics of serenity and calmness of mind elevates him from man the animal to man the divine and a part inseparable of the All Beautiful. Gandhi also heightens the concept of man in his aesthetic role in negotiating violence by non-violence from two other vital perspectives. First, to err is human and to forgive and forget, divine. Herein lies the beauty of non-violence that enables man to rise above petty self-interest and self-glory. Second, violence replaced by non-violence shows the indomitable power of man who knows how to win over erudities and littleness in his very approach to evaluating the antecedents and consequences of violence. Moreover, it also indicates that by dint of application of the aesthetics of goodness for one and all in course of following the principles of non-violence; he restrains himself from being unjust and indecisive by means of violent actions and even of contemplation.

That focal point of interest in Gandhian religion is man. Bereft of man, religion as Gandhi considers, turns out to be a dogma. Here, too, he adorns man not merely as a religious being, but obviously as an aesthetically religious being. Religion, therefore, becomes an aesthetics life force for man with inner poignance of Truth. The religion of man, as Gandhi advocates, is the religion of compassion, of living together, and never torment the orgy of irreligion in apathy and hatred for man. Gandhian religion also re-ensures the fact that man is never brutal but always friendly and benevolent. 'Brutalization of human nature', as he thinks, can be encountered most successfully not by brutal force or violence, but by admitting the divine essence of man, which is beyond destruction and, therefore, always alive and inspiring and stimulating to anyone who cares for the muse of the glory of man. Man, the apparently brutal being, frantically seeks an antidote to his animal passion, which is always to be had within himself only when he is allowed to identify and eliminate his brutal behavioural designs and spurts. Gandhi also reminds man of the fact that as a human being each man is an indivisible part of God. All men are, according to him, the sons of God and, as such, the wrong committed by one man is also the wrong of the other.

Man: A manifestation of God

In keeping with his religious beliefs he modestly accepted the Hindu view which states that "man is a complex, multi-dimensional being including within him different elements of matter, life, consciousness, intelligence and the divine spark". But Gandhi did not rest content with accepting blindly the Hindu concept of man. He gave it a revolutionary thrust by uncovering the dynamism inherent in it Basic to Gandhi's concept of the human self is the belief that man is essentially a manifestation of God. Gandhi understood and acknowledged the physical, psychological, intellectual and moral dimensions of the human self. But underlying all these, as the informing principle, is the spirit or the soul which is 'original and co-eternal with God' though part of God and as such dependent on God . It is clear that this view is logically connected to his view of the world also. As everything in the universe is a manifestation of God man cannot be otherwise. He says, if the world is but a reflection of *Brahman*, the individual self is but a spark of the Universal effulgence. Indeed both are one, but for the limiting conditions. For quite some time this *Upanishadic* vision that atman the individual self , and *Paramatman*, the Imperishable, Unmanifest, Exhaustless and Supreme Brahman, are not two but one. So, in order to describe his concept of the self especially the relationship between God and the individual soul, Gandhi used to quote an Urdu couplet which means "Adam is not God, but he is a spark of the divine". But later the *Upanishadic* vision became clearer to him and he whole-heartedly subscribed to that view of non-dualism between the universal self and the individual self. In a letter to Mira Behn, Gandhi confessed that the meaning of the last two lines of the first verse of the morning prayer in the Ashram, which means: "I am that immaculate *Brahman* which ever notes the states of dream, wakefulness. and deep sleep, not this body, the compound made of elements", upset him. He wrote,"Formerly I used to shudder to utter this verse, thinking the claim made therein was arrogant. But when I saw the meaning more clearly. I perceived at once that... we are the Being, the witness pervading the countless bodies".

What actually Gandhi wants man to have it to undergo trying transcendence in order to be a global partner of One World. One man, one great family of man. Let the *Upanishadic* spirit, the spirit of oneness of mankind, be the guiding spirit of man. Let man march ahead to fulfill the global mission of man*: Vasudhaivakutumvakam*-the endearing relationship between man and man.

3.4 IMPLICATIONS

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

The doctrine of man's oneness with God and humanity has several implications. First of all, this doctrine is incompatible with the belief that an individual may gain spiritually and those that surround him suffer. Gandhi believed that if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him and, if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent. There is not a single virtue which aims at or is content with the welfare of the individual alone. Conversely, there is not a single moral offense which does not, directly or indirectly, affect many others besides the actual offender. Hence, whether an individual is good or bad is not merely his own concern, but really the concern of the whole community, indeed of the whole world. Secondly, the monistic doctrine implies that all human beings are working consciously or unconsciously towards the realization of that identity. Thirdly, what one man is capable of achieving is possible for all to attain. The soul is one in all. Its possibilities are the same for everyone. Fourthly, it is quite proper to resist and attack a system, but to attack and resist the author is tantamount to resisting and attacking oneself. Fifthly, man's ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities, social, political, religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavor, simply because the only way to find God is to see God in creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all, as he says, "I am a part and parcel of the whole, and I cannot find Him apart from the rest of humanity."

Oneness of man and of all life:

Another implication of the conviction that man is the manifestation of the Supreme is the belief that all life is one. And like an *advaitin*, Gandhi did believe in the essential oneness of everything, sentient and non-sentient. This belief further implies that the universe is a harmonious whole whose parts should naturally and spontaneously function together. So everything and everyone has its role or duty, value and significance. Thus equality comes up as a natural corollary to this belief. It follows that inequality, segregation, discrimination. violence or exploitation of any sort is unnatural and against the law of God. world and man. Gandhi's proclaimed stand against exploitation and injustice of any kind, whether it be untouchability, racism, or suppression of women, is in keeping with this belief that all life is one. In short, a whole set of new attitudes and values are born out of this vision and they serve as the foundation on which a new order in tune with the perception of oneness is to be evolved .

The sense of oneness of the entire humanity and non-human nature has another insight to offer regarding the impact of human action on society and the natural environment. Since all life is one and man is gregarious every single act of the individual whether intentional or otherwise. exerts its impact on society. So Gandhi considers it the bounden duty of every one to exercise his reason and will carefully and cautiously and modulate his behaviour in such a way that the whole community, nay, the whole world gains out of it.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) How are Man and God related ?

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………….

2) Reflect on the implications that flow from Gandhi's concept of human nature.

………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………...

…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

3.5 LET US SUM UP

We have attempted to have a bird's-eye-view of Gandhian understanding of human nature and its essence. The significance of the Gandhian views on the condition of man is the preparedness for error in our endeavors and the readiness to take large risks, checked by a continuous exercise of self-analysis and the willingness to make amends for mistakes made through weakness of will. Such involvement in the affairs of the world combined with the discipline that comes with the cultivation of inwardness merges the ideal of individual enlightenment and collective welfare. One should strive towards this awareness which can only be the outcome of one's realization of self and its nature.

3.6 KEY WORDS

Cosmos: a well-coordinated whole whose parts were all interdependent**.**

Brahmanirvana: self-realization through the service of men.

Consciously-divine: endowed with the potential of divinity.

3.7 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

Datta, Dhirendra Mohan. *The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*. Madison: University Of Wisconsin Press, 1961.

Diwakar, R.R. "Gandhi is Spirituality in Action" in *Gandhi Marg*. Vol. VI. No. 11. February 1985.

Iyer, Raghavan. *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

Parekh, Bhikhu. *Gandhi: A Very Short Introduction* USA: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Radhakrishnan, S. Ed. *Mahatma Gandhi: Essays and Reflections on His Life and Work*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1939.

________________ *Mahatma Gandhi-100 years*. New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1968.

Reylonds, Reginald. *To Live in Mankind- A Quest for Gandhi*. London: Andre Deutsch, 1951.

Terchek, R. *Gandhi: Struggling for Autonomy*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1988.

UNIT 4 ETHICAL TEACHINGS OF GANDHI

Contents

4.0 Objectives
4.1 Introduction
4.2 Non-Violence
4.3 Truth
4.4 Non-stealing
4.5 Celibacy
4.6 Non-possessiveness
4.7 Character
4.8 Life Moral Teachings
4.9 Let Us Sum Up
4.10 Key Words
4.11 Further Readings and References

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you should be able to;

- Explain the Gandhi concept of non-violence
- Interpret the Gandhi idea of truth
- Discuss the Gandhi conception of non-stealing
- Know the Gandhi view on non-possessiveness
- Elucidate the Gandhi vision on Celibacy
- Understand the Gandhi ideas on character
- Know the Gandhi life moral teachings

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) is a father of our nation. Ethical teachings are the central philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi is a universally accepted as an exemplary model of ethical and moral life, with a rare blending of personal and public life, the principles and practices, the immediate and the eternal. He considered life to be an integrated whole, growing from truth to truth every day in moral and spiritual status. He believed in a single standard of conduct founded on dharma of truth and nonviolence. He successfully led nonviolent struggles against racial discrimination, colonial rule, economic and social exploitation and moral degradation. So long as these manifestations of violence remain, Gandhi will remain relevant. Gandhi was a good man in a world where few resist the corroding influence of power, wealth and vanity.

Among the vital messages of Gandhi's leadership are: even one person can make a difference; strength comes not from physical capacity but from an indomitable will. Mahatma Gandhi was not an armchair academician or a cloistered visionary. He was deeply concerned with the world around him. He disclaimed being a visionary. Gandhi spoke in a low tone and was a hesitant public speaker. Yet people of all classes were drawn to him and instinctively felt him to be a leader of deeply spiritual and moral perceptions, which he sought to realize through the pursuit of Truth. Over 54 years of Gandhi's public life were lived as an open book. He lived in South Africa for 21 years and then in India from 1915. All through his life he remained a seeker after Truth.

A central quality of his leadership was its natural evolution through intense interaction with the people and the events. Gandhi single-handedly made nonviolence a universal substitute for violence and the bed-rock of his leadership. His nonviolence was the way to counter injustice and exploitation, and not run away from a righteous battle. He associated the qualities of humility, compassion, forgiveness and tolerance as corollaries of nonviolence. To Gandhi the spirit of service and sacrifice was the key to leadership. For the spirit of service to materialize we must lay stress on our responsibilities and duties and not on rights. He illustrated it through the example of concentric circles: one starts with service of those nearest to one and expands the circle of service until it covers the universe, no circle thriving at the cost of the circles beyond. Service to him implied self-sacrifice. He said that Sacrifice is the law of life. It runs through and governs every walk of life. We can do nothing or get nothing without paying a price for it, in other words, without sacrifice.

The commitment to service, however demands a strong sense of conscience (moral imperative), courage (fearlessness, bravery, initiative), and character (integrity). To Mahatma Gandhi, 'inner voice' was synonymous with conscience. Leaders need to develop and follow their conscience even more than ordinary people as they set the path for others. Hence, he wrote: None of us, especially no leader should allow himself to disobey the inner voice in the face of pressure from outside, any leader who succumbs in this way forfeits his right of leadership. For a leader to follow the right path requires courage and its associated qualities: Courage, endurance and above all, fearlessness and spirit of willing sacrifices are the qualities that are required today in India for leadership.

Gandhi in his time wielded more power over the minds of people than any other individual but it was not the power of weapons, or terror or violence; it was the power of his convictions, his pursuit of truth and nonviolence, fearlessness, love and justice, working through incessant service and sacrifice for fellow human beings. His power came from empowering the weak, to lead the masses in the fight against injustice, exploitation, violence and discrimination. Satyagraha elevated the struggle for survival to the highest moral-spiritual levels and ordinary, emaciated people turned heroes. His power arose through the people whom he gave a sense of self-respect, purpose and moral strength.

Mahatma Gandhi expresses that morality is quite inseparable with the conception of God and religion. Morality is the core essence or religion. For Mahatma Gandhi, spiritual is the highest goal of man and all else must be sub-servant to that goal. Mahatma Gandhi said that there are seven deadly sins in human life. The following seven sins are deadly sins according to Gandhi. They are 1.Wealth without work. 2. Pleasure without conscience. 3. Knowledge without character. 4. Commerce without morality. 5. Science without humanity. 6. Religion without sacrifice. 7. Politics without principle. Ethical teachings of Gandhi are the great source for right, peaceful, healthy and blissful living in the world.

4.2 NON-VIOLENCE

Mahatma Gandhi says that Non-violence means to keep oneself completely away from such action which may hurt others physically or mentally. Violence is a behavior involving physical force intending to hurting, damaging or killing. Non-violence is to bear distresses by oneself to make others happy. Non-violence is the most effective means to fight against discrimination and falsehood. Non-violence is not the outward strength. Non-violence is the internal power. Non-violence promotes vegetarianism and reverence for all life. Non-violence prevents murder, war, capital punishment in the world. Non-violence avoids abortion, mercy killing, suicide and infanticide in human society. Non-violence creates freedom from physical and psychological violence, exploitation, injustice, inequality and discrimination. Non-violence develops love, co-operation, forgiving, help, and kindness in humanity. Non-violence is fundamental to the discovery of truth. Truth is God and non-violence is God’s love. Truth is the ultimate goal of human life and non-violence is the means to achieve ultimate goal. Without violence it is not possible to seek and find truth. Non-violence and truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disintegrate and separate them. They are like the two sides of the same coin. Mahatma Gandhi expresses that the first step in non-violence is that we cultivate in our daily life, as between ourselves, truthfulness, humility, tolerance, loving, and kindness. Honesty, they say in English, is the best policy. But in terms of non-violence is an unchangeable creed. It has to be pursued in face of violence raging around you. Non-violence with a non-violent man is no merit. In fact, it is become difficult to say whether it is non-violent at all. But when it is pitted against violence, then one realizes the difference between the two. This we cannot do unless we are ever wakeful, ever vigilant and striving.

The power of non-violence is the power of internal force. According to Mahatma Gandhi It is no non-violence if we merely love those who love us. It is non-violence only when we love those who hate us. Non-violence to be a potent force must begin with the mind. Non-violence of the body without co-operation of mind is the non-violence of the weak or the cowardly, and has therefore, no potency. It is a degrading performance. If we bear the malice and hatred in our bosoms and pretend not to retaliate it must recoil upon us and to destruction. It follows, therefore, that if non-violence becomes successfully established in one place, its influence will spread everywhere. The basic principle on which non-violence rests is that holds good in respect of oneself equally applies to the whole universe.

Mahatma Gandhi tells that the non-violence of my conception is a more active and more real fighting against wickedness than retaliation whose very nature is to increase wickedness. Non-violence is one of the major moral qualities of human being. Non-violence is a power force than violence because it is linked with the bravery of mind. Non-violence is a powerful weapon of the strong. Mahatma Gandhi used non-violence not only for the purification of his soul, but to purify the conduct of the human society. He practiced non-violence in mass action and devised means to fight out injustice.

Check your progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

.

1) What is your understanding on the concept of non-violence of Gandhi?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………

2) What is the difference between violence and non-violence in the views of Gandhi?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………

4.3 TRUTH

Mahatma Gandhi says that truth is the law of our being. Truth is God. Truth is which is. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. Truth is a virtue. Truth is in fact self-revealing, but that we have become blind on account of our ignorance. Ignorance, according to Mahatma Gandhi, is not necessary or natural to the self. Mahatma Gandhi says that moral degradation or perversion of one kind or cause ignorance. He explicitly mentions the six deadly enemies which cause prejudice, malice and ill-will to arise, on account of which the person is unable to see or feel the truth. These deadly enemies are desire, anger, greed, attachment, pride and jealousy. Therefore, in order to practice truth one must constantly endeavor to oneself from these evils, one must cultivate moral purity and courage and must not allow these enemies to cloud his vision.

Mahatma Gandhi is also aware that in the present day world falsehood appears to be more paying and beneficial. By speaking lies people do get success. Mahatma Gandhi is aware of it, but very logically he demonstrates the superiority of truth over falsehood. There is one condition regarding the speaking of the truth which Mahatma Gandhi accepts because of its pragmatic value. Even in accepting this Mahatma Gandhi is trying to be faithful to the ancient Indian teaching. The condition is that the truth should be spoken in a pleasant way. If the truth is expressed in an unpleasant, blunt and rough manner, it may be socially injurious as a might give rise to anger and quarrels. In fact, in the ancient Indian philosophy there is a maxim which says, ‘speak the truth, and speak the pleasant; but do not speak the unpleasant truth’. Mahatma Gandhi seems to be influenced by the element of practically contained in this maxim. Therefore, he says that truthfulness has to be practiced, that it is an art which has to be developed by rigorous and constant discipline and practice.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

.

1) What is meant by truth according to Gandhi?

……
……
……
…………………………………………………………………………………………

2) What are the inner deadly enemies to prevent to see the truth?

……
……
……
……
…………………………………………………………………………………

4.4 NON-STEALING

Mahatma Gandhi tells that Non-stealing is not to steal. Non-stealing is not to take by thought, word and action anything to which one is not entitled. There are two senses of the word non-stealing; it popularly means the observance of the rule of not taking away the belonging or the property of anybody unless it is given by that person. But, there is a more rigorous meaning of the word non-stealing; it forbids the keeping or holding in possession of such things that are not needed.

Mahatma Gandhi uses the non-stealing in both these senses. In fact, in conceiving the nature of this virtue he is influenced by Jainism which believes that stealing is also a kind of violence. Property is, in fact, outer life, because bodily existence depends upon property. Therefore, to rob one of his properties is to take away his outer life. Non-stealing is a virtue also because stealing is not compatible with the highest virtue of love. Therefore Mahatma Gandhi recommends that a truly moral individual has to take a solemn vow to cultivate the virtue of non-stealing.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

.

1) What is your understanding on the principle of non-stealing of Gandhi?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………

2) What is the difference between stealing and non-stealing in the ideas of Gandhi?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

4.5 CELIBACY

Mahatma Gandhi expresses that Celibacy is abstention from self-indulgence by thought, speech and action. Self-indulgence means indulging one's desires excessively. Celibacy is restricted to chastity. Celibacy means abstinence from sexual relations or at least physical control over the organ of generation. Mahatma Gandhi uses the celibacy both in its popular sense, and in its traditional sense. He emphasizes the importance of sexual control. Celibacy is putting a check and restraint over all the senses and the mind. Senses often delude us and misguide us. Immorality is basically born out of a desire to satisfy the demands of the senses. Therefore, we must cultivate a discipline by which we, instead of being led astray by the senses, may be able to keep the senses under control. In fact, even sexual control cannot be practiced unless senses are put in check. For example, Mahatma Gandhi feels that our food habits have to be changed. The palate is responsible for our taking delicious and rich food, which, in its turn, causes sexual urge to arise. Therefore, Mahatma Gandhi experimented with different kinds of food, just in order to evolve a food pattern, which, without reducing the health value of food, would not allow amorous and undesirable urges to arise. The name celibacy is given to a discipline of this kind.

4.6 NON-POSSESSIVENESS

Mahatma Gandhi says that Non-possessiveness is renunciation of possessions by thought, word and deed. Non-possessiveness is restricted to contentment. Non-possessiveness is non-acceptance. Possessiveness is unwilling to share one's possessions. Mahatma Gandhi feels that the tendency to possess things is the cause of all evils. Therefore, one must cultivate the discipline of living with what one has. Mahatma Gandhi is aware that it is not possible to practice this virtue in the absolute way, because absolute non-possession is impossible in life; even the body is a possession- the things needed for the preservation of the body are also possessions, and therefore, so long as we are alive we cannot completely do away with possessions. Even so, non-possessiveness has to be practiced to the best of one's capacity because this does away with the cause of rift in social life and provides a solid foundation for a universal love to flourish.

4.7 CHARACTER

Mahatma Gandhi expresses that Character is moral and ethical strength. Character comes from within. Character is the key to success. A man of character will make himself worthy of any position he is given. Character, not brains, will count at the crucial moment. Character is any day more eloquent than speech. Character must be above suspicion and truthful and self-controlled.

What will tell in the end will be character and not a knowledge of letters. What we start receiving education through our own language, our relations in the home will take on a different character. The real property that a parent can transmit to all equally is his or her character and educational facilities. The truest test of civilization, culture and dignity is character and not clothing. Success is the certain result of suffering of the extremist character voluntarily undergone. Sorrow and suffering make for character if they are voluntarily borne, but not if they are imposed. Men of stainless character and self-purification will easily inspire confidence and automatically purify the atmosphere around them. In the times to come the people will not judge us by the creed we profess or the label we wear or the slogans we shout but by our work, industry, sacrifice, honesty and purity of character. If you express the requisite purity of character in action, you cannot do it better than through the spinning wheel. If you have no character to lose, people will have no faith in you. Character alone will have real effect on masses.

Mahatma Gandhi tells that all your scholarship, all your study of Shakespeare and Wordsworth would be vain if at the same time you do not build your character and attain mastery over your thoughts and your actions. A vow imparts stability, ballast and firmness to one’s character. A language is an exact reflection of the character and growth of its speakers. A dissolute character is more dissolute in thought than in deed, and the same is true of violence. Literary training by itself adds not an inch to one’s moral height and character building is independent of literary training. Character cannot be built with mortar and stone. It cannot be built by other hands than your own. The principal and professors cannot give you character from the pages of books. Character building comes from their very lives and really speaking it must come from within you. Mahatma says that if wealth is lost nothing is lost; if health is lost something is lost; if character is lost everything is lost.

4.8 LIFE MORAL TEACHINGS

Mahatma Gandhi expressed life moral teachings in his writings and speeches. Life moral teachings Presented here are drawn from Gandhi's writings and speeches. Perhaps in our time there will be even greater opportunities to put them to good use. They are, 1. Our aim is the establishment of the kingdom of Righteousness on earth. 2. Peace has its victories more glorious than those of war. 3. Real disarmament cannot come unless the nations of the world cease to exploit one another. 4. No matter how insignificant the thing you have to do, do it as well as you can, give it as much of your care and attention as you would give to the thing you regard as most important. 5. Nonviolence, in the very nature of things, is of no assistance in the defense of ill-gotten gains and immoral acts. 6. Nonviolence is never a method of coercion, it is one of conversion. 7. Nonviolent struggle is impossible without capital in the form of character. 8. Recall the face of the poorest and the most helpless man whom you may have seen and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he be able to gain

anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? 9. Religions are different roads converging on the same point. 10. Religion which takes no account of practical affairs and does not help to solve them is no religion. 11. Rights that do not flow directly from duty well performed are not worth having. 12. Satisfaction lies in the effort, not in the attainment. Full effort is full victory. 13. No human being is so bad as to be beyond redemption. 14. Silence becomes cowardice when occasion demands speaking out the whole truth and acting accordingly. 15. Strength of numbers is the delight of the timid. The valiant in spirit glories in fighting alone. 16. Terrorism and deception are weapons not of the strong but of the weak. 17. That line of action is alone justice which does not harm either party to a dispute. 18. The acquisition of the spirit of nonresistance changes one's outlook upon life. It puts different values upon things and upsets previous calculations. And when it is set in motion, its effect can overtake the whole world. It is the greatest force because it is the highest expression of the soul. 19. The best politics is right action. 20. The danger is greatest when victory seems nearest.21. The fabled godly Elephant King was saved only when he thought he was at his last gasp. 22. The first principle of nonviolent action is that of noncooperation with everything humiliating. 23. The fullest life is impossible without an immovable belief in a Living Law in obedience to which the whole universe moves. 24. The highest moral law is that we should unremittingly work for the good of mankind. 25. The movement of noncooperation, if it may be considered a revolution, is not an armed revolt; it is an evolutionary revolution, it is a bloodless revolution. The movement is a revolution of thought, or spirit. 26. The problem is a world problem. No nation can find its own salvation by breaking away from others. We must all be saved or we must all perish together. 27. There is a power now slumbering within us, which if awakened would do to evil what light does to darkness. 28. The right to err, which means the freedom to try experiments, is the universal condition of all progress. 29. To believe that what has not occurred in history will not occur at all is to argue disbelief in the dignity of man.
30. To benefit by others' killing and delude oneself into the belief that one is being very religious and nonviolent is sheer self-deception. 31. True morality consists not in following the beaten track, but in finding out the true path for us and fearlessly following it. 32. Truth never damages a cause that is just. 33. Violence is suicide. 34. We are all children of one and the same God and, therefore, absolutely equal. 35. We hug the chains that bind us. 36. We leave things to Fate after exhausting all the remedies. 37. We may attack measures and systems. We may not, we must not, attack people. Imperfect ourselves, we must be tender toward others and slow to impute their motives. 38. We may not be God but we are of God -- even as a little drop of water is of the ocean. 39. We must combat the wrong by ceasing to assist the wrongdoer, directly or indirectly. 40. Western democracy as it functions today is diluted Nazism or fascism. At best it is merely a cloak to hide the Nazi and fascist tendencies of imperialism.

41. What is possible for one is possible for all. 42. When we disobey a law, it is not for want of respect for lawful authority, but in obedience to the higher law of our being, the voice of conscience. 43. Where Love is, there God is also. 44. Where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence. 45. Conscience is a good guide for individual conduct, imposition of that conduct upon others would be an insufferable interference with their freedom of conscience. 46. Whomsoever you follow, howsoever great he might be, see to it that you follow the spirit of the master and not imitate him mechanically.

47. You should be pioneers in presenting a living faith to the world and not the dry bones of a traditional faith which the world will not grasp. 48. A Government that is evil has no room for good men and women except in its prisons. 49. All faiths constitute a revelation of Truth, but all are imperfect. 50. All fear is a want of faith. 51. All other pleasures and possessions pale into nothingness before service which is rendered in a spirit of joy. 52. A nonviolent resister cannot wait or delay action till perfect conditions are forthcoming. 53. A nonviolent revolution is not a program for the seizure of power. It is a program for the transformation of relationships ending in a peaceful transfer of power. 54. A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history. 55. By our actions we mean to show that physical force is nothing compared (to) moral force. 56. Capital as such is not evil; it is its wrong use that is evil. 57. Civil disobedience without constructive programs is bound to fail. 58. Cooperation with good is as much a duty as noncooperation with evil. 59. Do not undertake anything beyond your capacity, and at the same time do not harbor the wish to do less than you can. One who takes up tasks beyond his powers is proud and attached. On the other hand, one who does less than he can is a thief. 60. Do not worry about what others are doing. Each of us should turn the searchlight inward and purify our own hearts as much as possible.

61. Each step upward makes me feel stronger and fit for the next step. 62. Every one of my failures has been a steppingstone. 63. Every right carries with it a corresponding duty. 64. Everything is done openly and aboveboard, for truth hates secrecy. 65. Evil can only be sustained by violence. 66. Exploitation is the essence of violence. 67. Faith does not admit of telling. It has to be lived and then it becomes self-propagating. 68. Faith is nothing but a living, wide-awake consciousness of God within. 69. Fearlessness is the first requisite of spirituality. Cowards can never be moral. 70. For a nonviolent person the whole world is one family. He will thus fear none, nor will others fear him. 71. Freedom won through bloodshed or fraud is no freedom. 72. Given the opportunity, every human being has the same possibility for spiritual growth. 73. God is conscience. 74. God reveals Himself daily to every human being but we shut our ears to "the still small voice." 75. Good government is no substitute for self-government. 76. He who is ever brooding over results often loses nerve in the performance of duty. 77. I am a Christian and a Hindu and a Moslem and a Jew. 78. I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes. 79. I believe in the essential unity of man and, for that matter, all that lives. Therefore, I believe that if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him; and, if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent. 80. I believe that no government can exist for a single moment without the cooperation of the people, willing or forced, and if people suddenly withdraw their cooperation in every detail, the government will come to a standstill.

81. I can retain neither respect nor affection for a government which has been moving from wrong to wrong in order to defend its immorality. 82. I did not move a muscle when I first heard that the atom bomb had wiped out Hiroshima. On the contrary, I said to me, "unless now the world adopts non-violence, it will spell certain suicide for mankind." 83. If a father does an injustice, it is the duty of his children to leave the parental roof. If the headmaster of a school conducts his institution on an immoral basis, the pupils must leave the school. If the chairman of a corporation is corrupt, the members thereof must wash their hands clean of his corruption by withdrawing from it; even so, if a Government does a grave injustice, the subjects must withdraw

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

cooperation wholly or partially, sufficiently to wean the ruler from his wickedness. 84. If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself. 85. I hate privilege and monopoly. Whatever cannot be shared with the masses is taboo to me. 86. Individuals or nations, who would practice nonviolence, must be prepared to sacrifice [everything] except honor.

87. In matters of conscience, the law of majority has no place. 88. In nonviolent resistance, success is possible even if there is only one nonviolent resister of the proper stamp. 89. In the secret of my heart I am in perpetual quarrel with God that He should allow such to go on (Written in September 1939 at the start of World War II). 90). Intolerance betrays want of faith in one's cause. 91. It has always been a mystery to me how men can feel themselves by humiliation of their fellow beings. 92. It is a million times better to appear untrue before the world than to be untrue to ourselves. 93. It is not nonviolence if we love merely those who love us. It is nonviolence only when we love those who hate us. 94. It is sinful to buy and use articles made by sweated labor. 95. I want freedom for the full expression of my personality. 96. A civilization is to be judged by its treatment of minorities. 97. Love is the law of life. 98. Love never claims it ever gives. 99. Nothing enduring can be built on violence.

Check Your Progress IV

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

.

1) What is celibacy according to Gandhi?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………

2) What are the unique contents on life moral teachings of Gandhi?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………

3) What is your understanding on character in view of Gandhi?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

4.9 LET US SUM UP

Mahatma Gandhi is a great ethical values philosopher. Let us sum up this unit with brief essence of ethical teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi expresses that non-violence is free from physical and psychological violence in living. Violence is hurting killing damaging physical and psychological sense. Non-violence develops vegetarianism and respect for all life. Non-violence prevents wars murders, exploitations, inequalities and injustices in the world. Non-violence is a discovery of truth. Non-violence is the means to truth. Truth is the law of our being. Truth is God. Truth is which is. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. Truth is a virtue. Truth is in fact self-revealing, but that we have become blind on account of our ignorance. Mahatma Gandhi explicitly mentions the six deadly enemies which cause prejudice, malice and ill-will to arise, on account of which the person is unable to see or feel the truth. These deadly enemies are desire, anger, greed, attachment, pride and jealousy. Therefore, in order to practice truth one must constantly endeavor to oneself from these evils, one must cultivate moral purity and courage and must not allow these enemies to cloud his vision. Non-stealing is not to take by thought, word and action anything to which one is not entitled. Non-stealing is a good moral quality. Mahatma Gandhi expresses that Celibacy is abstention from self-indulgence by thought, speech and action. Self-indulgence means indulging one’s desires excessively. Celibacy means abstinence from sexual relations or at least physical control over the organ of generation. Celibacy is restricted to chastity. Non-possessiveness is renunciation by thought, word and deed. Non-possessiveness is restricted to contentment. Non-possessiveness is non-acceptance. Mahatma Gandhi feels that the tendency to possess things is the cause of all evils. Therefore, one must cultivate the discipline of living with what one has. Mahatma Gandhi expresses that Character is moral and ethical strength. Character comes from within. Character is the key to success. A man of character will make himself worthy of any position he is given. Character, not brains, will count at the crucial moment. Character is any day more eloquent than speech. Character must be above suspicion and truthful and self-controlled. True disarmament cannot come unless the nations of the world cease to exploit one another. Morality is finding out the true path and fearlessly following it.

4.10 KEY WORDS

Non-violence: Nonviolence is tolerance and love. Non-violence is non-injury in thought, word and deed, including negative abstention from inflicting positive injury to any being, as well as positive help to any suffering creature.

Truth: Truth is God. Truth is which is. Truth is truth in thought, word and deed.

Non-stealing: Non-stealing is not to steal, in example not to take by thought, word and action, anything to which one is not entitled.

Celibacy: Celibacy is abstention from self-indulgence by thought, speech and action. It is restricted to chastity.

Non-possessiveness: Non-possessiveness is renunciation by thought, word and deed. It is restricted to contentment.

Character: Character is moral and ethical strength. Character comes from within. Character is inner and outer goodness.

4.11 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCESS

Basant Kumar Lal. *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass publishers 2005.

C.D. Sharma. C*ritical Survey of Indian Philosophy*. Delhi: Motilal banarsidass publishers 1987.

Mahatma Gandhi. *The Collected works of Mahatma Gandhi*. Ahmedabad: Navajeevan publishers 1980.

Mahatma Gandhi. *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Ahmedabad: Navajeevan publishers, 1990.

Mahatma Gandhi. *Basic Education.* Ahmedabad: Navajeevan publishers 1985.

Indira Gandhi National Open University
School of Interdisciplinary and
Trans-disciplinary Studies

MPYE – 015

Gandhian Philosophy

Block 2

GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

UNIT 1
Gandhian Concept of God

UNIT 2
Role of Reason and Faith

UNIT 3
Religious Experience and Ashram Life

UNIT 4
Religious Tolerance and Religious Harmony

Expert Committee

Prof. Gracious Thomas
Director, School of
Social Work, IGNOU

Prof. Renu Bharadwaj
School of Humanities
IGNOU

Prof. George
Panthanmackel,
Senior Consultant,
IGNOU

Dr. M. R. Nandan
Govt. College for
Women
Mandya - Mysore

Dr. Kuruvila
Pandikattu
Jnana-deepa
Vidyapeeth
Ramwadi, Pune

Dr Babu Joseph
CBCI Centre
New Delhi

Prof. Tasadduq Husain
Aligarh Muslim
University, Aligarh

Dr. Bhuvaneswari
Lavanya Flats
Gangai Amman Koil
Thiruvanmiyur
Chennai – 600 041

Dr. Alok Nag
Vishwa Jyoti Gurukul
Varanasi

Dr. Jose Kuruvachira
Salesian College &
IGNOU Study Centre
Dimapur, Nagaland

Dr. Sathya Sundar
Sethy
Dept of Humanities
IIT, Chennai.

Dr. Joseph Martis
St. Joseph's College
Jeppu, Mangalore – 2

Dr. Jaswinder Kaur
Dhillon
147, Kabir park
Opp. GND University
Amristar – 143 002

Prof. Y.S. Gowramma
Principal,
College of Fine Arts,
Manasagangotri
Mysore – 570 001

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

Block Preparation

Unit 1	Dr. P.I. Devaraj Payannur, Kerala.
Units 2-4	Dr. Pushparajan Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth Bangalore.

Content Editor

Dr. V. John Peter
St. Joseph's Philosophical College,
Kotagiri, Tamil Nadu.

Format Editor

Prof. Gracious Thomas
IGNOU, New Delhi.

Programme Coordinator

Prof. Gracious Thomas
IGNOU, New Delhi.

BLOCK INTRODUCTION

Gandhi was deeply a religious person. His religious experience did not consist in a single and specific experience that occurred at one moment of life but in a life-long experience that permeated into all aspects of life. Beside, the multi-religious atmosphere at home trained the boy to develop a sense of toleration to other religions. Gandhi defines religion as that which changes one's very nature, which binds one indissolubly to the truth within and become perfect. When morality incarnates itself in a living person it becomes religion. True religion and true morality are bound up with each other. Gandhi would even say that religion and morality are identical.

The basic conviction of Gandhi is that there is one reality-that is God, which is nothing else but Truth. His religious ideas are derived from that conviction. Sincere pursuit of Truth is religion. Religion is ordinarily defined as devotion to some higher power or principle. Gandhi is not against such a description of religion. He only qualifies it further by saying that, that higher principle being Truth, devotion to Truth or God is religion. Again, Gandhi could not find God apart from humanity. Therefore he believed that one could reach God by service to man. Hence, he dedicated his entire life to the cause of the human race.

Unit 1 speaks of how Gandhi related God to Truth. Different proofs for the existence of God as given by Gandhi are also provided. It enables the students to have an understanding of the influences that shaped Gandhian concept of God. If Truth is God sincere pursuit of Truth is religion. Again, Gandhi could not find God apart from humanity.

Unit 2 sheds light on the intricate problem regarding Faith and Reason in Gandhian philosophy of religion. Both Reason and Faith are considered to be valid sources of knowledge. Gandhi also, in his philosophy of religion, validates both Reason and Faith as authentic sources of religious experiences. The unit clearly define what reason and faith are and illustrates the relative merits of Reason and Faith in the Gandhian perspective.

Unit 3 elaborates Gandhi's experience and experiment with Ashram life. Undoubtedly Gandhi's whole life and work was fundamentally spiritual. Above all, his Ashram life played a key role in the making of his religious experience. It is of supreme significance for you to identify what his religious experience is, and specify the role ashram life in Gandhi's life and mission. Unit enables us to understand the different stages of his religious experience, to grasp the core aspect of that religious experience and to know the role of his ashram life in his religious experience.

Unit 4 discusses on Religious tolerance and harmony from Gandhian perspective. Religious tolerance is no more than the willingness of the adherents of a dominant religion to accept or allow other religions to exist, although they disagree with those religious beliefs and practices, look upon them with disapproval as inferior, mistaken or harmful. Real religious harmony will be brought about in a nation only when people realize that 'Truth is One but the Paths are Many,' that the goal of all religions is essentially the same despite their differences in worship-forms, belief-systems, and lifestyles.

UNIT 1 GANDHIAN CONCEPT OF GOD

Contents

1.0 Objectives
1.1 Introduction
1.2 Gandhian Concept of God
1.3 Influences that Shaped Gandhi's Idea of God
1.4 Gandhi's Theism
1.5 God as Truth
1.6 Truth as God
1.7 Proofs for the Existence of God
1.8 God and Evil
1.9 The Way to God
1.10 Let Us Sum Up
1.11 Key Words
1.12 Further Readings and References

1.0 OBJECTIVES

The basic objective of this unit is to give a brief idea about the notion of God in Gandhian thought. The influences that shaped his idea of God are dealt in brief in the beginning of the unit. Gandhi's theism as well as the influences of Advaita Philosophy are mentioned. How Gandhi related God to Truth is also explained in this unit. Different proofs for the existence of God as given by Gandhi are also provided. Finally, Gandhian views of the way to God and his explanation for the existence of evil in the world are included. By the end of this unit, you will be able to

- to have an understanding of the influences that shaped Gandhian concept of God,
- know about Gandhi's theism though he was an Advaitin to some extent;
- understand about Gandhi's transition from God is Truth to Truth is God;
- to have a basic knowledge about the different proofs put forward by Gandhi for the existence of God
- comprehend about the Gandhian views on liberation and the existence of evil in the world.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The basic conviction of Gandhi is that there is one reality-that is God, which is nothing else but Truth. His religious ideas are derived from that conviction. If Truth is God sincere pursuit of Truth is religion. Religion is ordinarily defined as devotion to some higher power or principle. Gandhi is not against such a description of religion. He only qualifies it further by saying that, that higher principle being Truth, devotion to Truth or God is religion. Again, Gandhi could not find God apart from humanity. Therefore he believed that one could reach God by service to man. Hence he dedicated his entire life to the cause of the human race. In this unit, we are dealing with the Gandhian concept of God which he considers to be the devotion to Truth.

1.2 GANDHIAN CONCEPT OF GOD

As a multi-faceted thinker, Mahatma Gandhi gave a new world-view for reconstruction of new society. His thinking was not confined to any one aspect of human being. His conceptualization about human being and their relationship with the society involved many philosophical concepts. Gandhi cannot be regarded as originating any new system of philosophy or any new religion in the academic sense of the term. He learned simply the principles or eternal truths from the greatest traditional philosophical and religious teachers of the world. But Gandhi's contribution lies in the fact that he tried to assimilate in his own way the teachings that appealed to him and to apply these not only in his personal life but also to the social, political and economic problems of the day.

1.3 INFLUENCES THAT SHAPED GANDHI'S IDEA OF GOD

It is true that Gandhi's thought has originality and freshness about it. But it carries on it the stamp of a number of influences. His family belonged to the traditional theistic faith called *Vaishnavism* which believed that salvation could be attained by devotion to God and service to humanity. Being brought up in a *Vaishnava* household, *Ahimsa* (Non-violence) was in his blood. At a very early age, Gandhi had studied the Gita and the Ramayana. Gita was the main source of inspiration for him and he referred to the Gita as his mother. For him, it was a book par excellence for the knowledge of Truth. Gandhi strongly appreciated and he himself practiced the doctrine of '*anasakti*' as advocated by the Gita in all aspects of his life.

Jainism and Buddhism had a profound influence on the life and thought of Mahatma Gandhi. Jaina influence was clearly visible in his conception of *satyagraha* and practice of non-violence. Similarly his respect for other religions could be attributed to the teachings of *Anekanta Vada*. Gandhi refers to this in his writings. Like Buddha, Gandhi also recognized the futility of caste distinctions, rites, rituals and dogmas. Gandhi was moved by the emphasis on morality by Buddhism. He was also deeply impressed by the teachings of Buddhist philosophy which preached universal love, non-injury to living beings, sacrifice and renunciation for the sake of promoting the welfare of all. Buddha stressed on purity of means which in turn influenced Gandhi who constantly maintained that there is indissoluble relationship between pure means and noble end.

Gandhi had great respect for the teachings of Jesus Christ also. According to him, the cross is the symbol of sacrifice and *satyagraha* stands for supreme sacrifice. It infuses the spirit to suffer and to overcome any dangerous situation. Thus *satyagraha* can be taken to be the practical application of the teachings of the Christ. Like Christ, Gandhi was also concerned with the individual’s inner purity and perfection. Gandhi was also influenced by the Islamic teachings to a great extent. He learnt the message of universal brotherhood from it. He accepted Quran’s faith in a Supreme God. God is infinite Power and Truth. According to Gandhi, Mohammed taught the religious principle of toleration, the brotherhood of man and absolute self surrender to God. Thus, we see that Gandhi was greatly influenced by the religious heritage of India and he borrowed considerably from Hinduism, Jainism Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. In his notion of God also we see a thorough influence of all these religions.

1.4 GANDHI’S THEISM

Even though it is difficult to reduce Gandhi's philosophy of God to any accepted philosophical models, it can be said to some extent that his theistic beliefs were more or less of the *Vaishnava* type .His early initiation into the *Vaishnava* cult and the influence of the family atmosphere in which he grew, implanted on his mind the rudiments of the idea of a theistic God .*Vaishnava* thinkers conceive God in a theistic manner and as such, God becomes a personal God. Gandhi’s philosophy of God is also strictly theistic in character and he feels that God is not merely for the satisfaction of reason or intellectual curiosity, but also for providing strength and solace. According to Gandhi, faith in God must enable an individual to be in peace with the world and it is possible only where an inter-personal relationship is possible and when God is conceived as a person. Gandhi was deeply impressed by the life and practices of the saints of the *Bhakti*-cult, and, therefore, it was not difficult for him for him to arrive at the conception of a personal God. He was helped in arriving at this notion of God by his studies of the Bible and Quran also.

The nuclear element of Gandhi's thoughts and activities was his belief in God. His idea of God is largely the product of the Hindu conception of God. God, according to him, is the vital force which is all pervading and all embracing. God is vast and boundless as an ocean and it is therefore impossible for man to imagine what He is like. Man can only conceive God wthin the limitations of his own mind. According to Gandhi, God is invisible, beyond the reach of the human eye. In his opinion, Ram, Rahim, God or Krishna are all attempts on the part of man to name that invisible force which is the greatest of all forces. Man can describe God in his own way, in accordance with his belief and understanding of reality.

Though in accordance with the traditional *Vaishnavism* Gandhi shows his leaning towards *Visitadvaita,* at other times he appears to be an *advaitin* like Sankara, believing that everything this world as the manifestation of one ultimate principle or reality. The Supreme reality, according to him, is the non-dual *Brahman*, and here Gandhi declares himself to be an *Advaitin*. He, like Sankara, says that nothing exists except Truth which Sankara calls *Brahman*. Again for Gandhi the primary connotation of the term ‘God’ is not personal. He describes God as the essence, pure consciousness, as force, as truth, goodness and love. God, according to him is undefined power pervading all life, the spirit, and the indefinable, formless and nameless. These descriptions point out to the idea of impersonal ultimate Reality or Absolute like the *Brahman* of Sankara.

At the same time, Gandhi also mentions that God is personal to those who feel his presence and embodied to those who need his touch. God is personal in the sense that He is approachable to man and is in close relation with him. Gandhi is not much concerned whether the devotee conceives God as personal or impersonal, so long as he is true to his devotion. For Gandhi, the best way to describe God's power would be to call it Truth or *Satya*, which is derived from '*sat*', which means being or to exist. Here he wants to say that God in reality is formless. But he assumes forms of a person for the good of his devotees. Hence he says that God is that indescribable entity which is unknowable but can be experienced. He is the source of light and life but transcends all. For those who need his presence, He is a personal God.

Again, according to Gandhi, it is not very important to know the attributes of God. They may be many and varied. All those attributes are parts of God. He is the law and the law giver at the same time. He is also truth, love, ethics and morality. He is the source of light and life and a million other things. He is the greatest living force or law that governs the whole universe or the entire human life.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your Answers.

1) What are the major influences that shaped the Gandhian Concpet of God?

----

2) 'The Hindu tradition has created in Gandhi settled notions about Reality.' – Discuss/How did

----

1.5 GOD AS TRUTH

In Gandhi, we find the age old teaching of the Upanishad that God is '*sat*' or Truth. In saying that God is Truth, it does not mean 'is truthful'. Truth here is conceived not as a mere attribute of God. But since it is derived from 'sat' which means 'being or is' nothing exists in reality except truth. Therefore the more truthful we are, the nearer we are to God. This concept of God as Truth, although not a new invention, is a some what unique approach to the meaning of God.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

Gandhi considers devotion to truth to be the only reason for our existence. Truth should be the very breath of our life. There should be truth in thought, word and action and one who has realized it becomes perfect, as all knowledge is included in it. He often used to quote a Sanskrit verse '*satya nasti paramo dharma'* which said that there is no religion higher than truth. He repeatedly asserted that all his activities whether, social, political or humanitarian is directed to the end of the search of Truth. In his autobiography he claimed "My uniform experience has convinced me that there is no other God higher than Truth". Gandhi's assertion that God is Truth carries with it a great value in religions and practical life. As the object of devotion is Truth, the end for which we should strive for is Truth. This will help us to create a sort of universal brotherhood in respect of religion. It can do away with the rivalries in the religious field to a great extent because worship of Truth can unify persons belonging to different castes, creeds and religions. The theistic current of Gandhi's thought meets with a difficulty when God and Truth are sought to be identified with each. Truth is an impersonal principle and God as conceived by Gandhi is a person. Let us see how Gandhi has found a solution to this problem.

1.6 TRUTH AS GOD

Gandhi was aware of this difficulty and therefore he tried to make his own stand point clear. He, instead of asserting the previous statement 'God is Truth' came to assert 'Truth is God'. There were very strong reasons for bringing abut this change. One reason for this change is that the word Truth is not as ambiguous as the word God. Nobody understands exactly the same thing by the word 'God'. God may be pantheistic, monotheistic or polytheistic. But, the word 'Truth' is always clear in its significance. Again, there is yet another reason for suggesting the change. It is possible to rationally doubt, or even to deny, the existence of God. But it is self contradictory to attempt to deny Truth. Gandhi realized that reason can raise arguments against the possibility of God's existence. But it cannot reject Truth. There are many skeptics and unbelievers of the God. But even they cannot deny Truth. Truth is the only factor which is completely universal and comprehensive and it provides a common platform for both the theist and atheist. This led Gandhi to assert the primacy of Truth. He said "My uniform experience has convinced me that there is no other God than Truth…" According to him, blind religious notions about God have done immense damage to mankind and therefore he shifted the emphasis from God to Truth.

In the initial stages of his experiments, Mahatma Gandhi was a firm believer in the ultimacy of God. Later he came in association with many sincere and thoughtful persons who honestly believed that the traditional idea of God was open to criticisms on account of its being a defective notion. But, even their rejection of God was based on a sincere desire to know the Truth. So Gandhi realized that reason could reject anything but not Truth. Truth appeared to him as the only force that could unify even conflicting ideas and ideals. This led to day that "if at all possible for human tongue to give the fullest description of God… then we must say that God is Truth… But I went a step further and said Truth is God". There are certain interesting implications of Gandhi's' assertion that Truth is God. These implications have both pragmatic and religious value. Here it is asserted that the object of worship is not God but Truth. This can very well become a basis for a really universal religion as worship of Truth can bring the whole world together as a whole.

Gandhi combines the logical as well as metaphysical meaning of the word Truth and then identify Truth with God. Here Truth is not the relative truth of our conception but the Absolute Truth, the eternal principle that is God. Reality according to Gandhi is Truth and Truth is Reality. Man's ideal is to achieve God through Truth and non-violence. But he cannot achieve perfect Truth. Gandhi considered that man is a finite being but God is infinite or the Absolute Truth which he strives to know. The only way to find God, he believed, is to see Him in His creations. One may therefore, strive to find God or the Absolute Truth through the service of humanity. Service of God and service of humanity are therefore one and the same. The greatnesses of man depend on the extent of service one does to others. It is impossible for man to know or realize the whole truth or the Absolute Truth, which is God.

Gandhi was of opinion that even though man cannot achieve perfect Truth, he should always try to achieve it more and more. Even if one can achieve relative truth he should be satisfied because the more he achieve it, the nearer he is to reality. Faith in God or Truth with a purity of soul is all that is required for reaching the full spiritual height that is possible for a man to attain. To Gandhi, God or Truth is an all pervasive presence or existence in the midst of which man has to learn to live and move about, though it is a very difficult task. But that is the only worth while way to be pursued by one who aspires after spiritual and moral elevation.

As a great force for liberation of man, Truth as Gandhi asserts, ought to be a permanent living force of humans. All goodness, all sincerity, all purpose, all welfare of humanity are based on it. Therefore, the freedom of fullness of man entirely depends on how one is justified and dedicated to it. Thus, Truth, raised ultimately to the position of God, constitutes the central theme in Gandhian philosophy upon which the whole of his socio-political and economic philosophy is based.

1.7 PROOFS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Mahatma Gandhi who was brought up in a *Vaishanava* family adopts the theistic views and believes that God is the creator and also the ruler of the Universe. Gandhi believed that a belief in God is essentially a matter of faith. He was convinced that God can be known only in a state of inner realization, that God's knowledge can only be revealed to an individual in some sincere and sacred inner experience. Even so, at time, Gandhi does talk about evidences of God's existence. The causal proof is based on the view that everything has a cause. Logically, the entire cosmos depends on the ultimate cause which is God. Gandhi says "If we exist, if our parents and their parents have existed then it is proper to believe in the parent of the whole creation". God is thus conceived as the 'parent' of the whole universe.

At various places Gandhi talks of the order and the harmony of the universe. He also says that there is a Law governing the universe. Then he argues that the order, harmony and the law cannot be explained unless an intelligent Law-giver is presupposed and says that it is God. One can find the traces of teleological proof for God's existence here. It is based on the observation that there is an underlying unity and purpose, adjustment and order in the cosmos. It is governed by some law and is moving towards some purpose or goal. Mahatma Gandhi observes “That there is orderliness in the universe, there is an unalterable law governing everything and every being that exists or lives. It is not a blind law, for no blind law can govern the conduct of living beings. That law then which governs all life is God”

But Mahatma Gandhi attaches great impotence to the moral proof. In fact, Gandhi values this proof very much and very frequently makes a reference to this. According to him the so called voice of conscience is God’s command and direct intimation t man. He seems to be convinced that the voice of conscience carries dependable testimony for God’s existence. If moral conscience is accepted as a command then we have to accept the source of this command and this is God. Conscience, according to him, represents the Divine in man. It sanctions the good and condemns the bad. One is constrained to feel the obedience of the dictates of this voice is one’s duty. Gandhi clearly says, “I have no special revelation of God’s will. My firm belief is that He reveals himself daily to every human being but we shut our eyes to the ‘still small voice’

Then, at times, Gandhi also made a reference to a kind proof that can be called ‘pragmatic proof’. Gandhi believes that a belief in God’s existence is necessary because God satisfies a very important aspect of our life. If we survey our life we find that over and above the wants and needs of every day existence, we do have an urge of a different kind which cannot be satisfied with the usual materialistic fulfillments of life, and which demands a spiritual satisfaction. We clearly realize that we are in need of a supreme object of love, by having a faith in which, we can derive strength, solace, peace and even happiness. This supreme object of love is nothing, but God.

Thus, Mahatma Gandhi offers a number of proofs for the existence of God. But above all faith, Gandhi believes, precedes all evidence. There is no argument to convince one who does not have faith in God. Faith transcends reason. Thus, it is apparent that, according to Gandhi, God not only transcends senses, but also defies rational proofs. God is a matter of inner realization and faith.

1.8 GOD AND EVIL

The existence of evil in the world is a fact which cannot be denied. It is difficult for a theist to accept evil along with the goodness of God. Hence Gandhi offers his own explanation with regard to the problem of evil and defined it as good or truth misplaced. He also said that if there is good there must also be evil just as where there is light there must be darkness. Gandhi explained that evils, sins etc are due to the wrong acts of man who are endowed with free will. Gandhi seems to have been influenced by traditional Hindu explanation which gives explanation for evils, sins and sufferings is karma and ignorance. Man suffers because of his own bad action which is due to ignorance about the truth of this universe, God and himself. Gandhi also believed that evils of the world are inspired by some unknown good motives, and not due to any evil intention of God who is all good, all just and all merciful. We have to recognize evil as something permitted by God in the world. Gandhi recognizes that there is a constant struggle between the evil forces and the forces of good in any society. This means that there shall be evil in the non-violent society also and it will be the duty of every individual to fight against it. In this way, society will gain strength from the existence of evil and not be weakened by it.

1.9 THE WAY TO GOD

Gandhi's ultimate spiritual goal is *moksa* or salvation which means freedom from the cycle of births and deaths. He himself confessed that his utmost desire was to merge himself in the Absolute. The body persists because of egoism. The utter extinction of this egoism therefore leads to *moksa*. This is the basic teaching of Indian philosophy and religion. Gandhi believed in the necessity for ceaseless effort in this spiritual endeavor. This also requires grace of God. With regard to the three paths leading to God-*jnana*, *bhakti*, and *karma,* Gandhi laid more emphasis on *bhakti* and *karma*, *of* devotion and complete self surrender to God. Here we see that he was influenced by *Bhagavad-Gita*. According to him, God is ready to forgive even the most dreadful sinner if he surrenders himself with the greatest devotion at the feet of God. He also relies on karma in the form of selfless service of the poor as a way to supreme God realization. He believed that to serve the poor was to serve the God. Thus we see that Gandhi realized the fact that karma and *bhakti* are complementary to one another. He was successful in creating a mutual connection among the different paths leading to the realization of God.

To Gandhi, *jivan mukti* or *mukti* while one is still alive is impossibility. A man can attain only '*videhamukti'* or deliverance after death. The cravings of the senses die away only when we cease to exist in the body. The yogi, according to Gandhi, is one who has controlled his mind and is completely free from all desires. Gandhi also asserts that a man of unceasing love is a perfectly enlightened man. By *moksa*, he means liberation from impure thoughts and weakness that are manifested in the form of violence. Thus, the ultimate objective of life that Gandhi aspired to, was achieving the liberation of soul from violence in thought, word and deed that might have enveloped it. Once that covering was removed, the soul or the Devine spark in him would shine in the fullest glory of Truth. The self then would begin to be realize the vision of God. Gandhi thus emphasized that the more truthful we are, the nearer we are to God. He thus wanted to show us that the way to God is through the commitment to truth.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your Answers.

1) What is the difference between 'God is Truth' and 'Truth is God' in Gandhian philosophy.?

---2) What was Gandhi's explanation with regard to the problem of Evil?

----

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

1.10 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we are dealing with the Gandhian concept of God. In the formation of his concept of God, Gandhi was influenced by a number of religious thoughts. They are dealt in brief. Though *Vaishnava* tradition in which Gandhi was bought up formulated a concept of personal God in Gandhi, he was equally impressed by the Advaita tradition also. Hence he defines God as Absolute Truth. 'God is Truth', goes the familiar saying, but Gandhi gave the statement an unusual twist. He argued that it is more correct to say 'Truth is God' and insisted that the distinction between the two statements is significant. This is also given with due emphasis in the unit. The proofs for the existence of God as given by Gandhi are given as the next topic in the unit. This is followed by Gandhi's explanation with regard to the problem of evil. The unit is concluded by a brief look into Gandhian conception of way to God or liberation. According to him, it can be attained through commitment to Truth.

1.11 KEY WORDS

Theism	: Belief in a God or Gods especially as creator of the world
Attribute	: Characteristic quality
Anekantavada	: Jaina theory of Reality
Vaishnavism	: Hindu tradition which considers Vishnu as the Supreme Deity
Advaita	: The doctrine of the Vedanta school associated with Shankara
Brahman	: The Absolute Reality or the supreme God-head without qualities or attributes
Jivanmukta	: One who has realized the self, even while living in this body

1.12 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

Barua, Manisha. *Religion and Gandhian Philosophy*. New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2002.

Chakrabarthy, Mohit. *Mahatma Gandhi: A Miscellany*. New Delhi: Mahamaya Publishing Hoouse, 2008.

Cortright, Davis. *Gandhi and Beyond*: *Non-Violence for an age of Terrorism.* New Delhi: Viva Books, 2007.

Dayal, Parmeshwari. *Gandhian Theory of Social Reconstruction.* New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2006.

Lal, Basant Kumar. *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2000.

Pandey, Ashutosh. *Relevance of Gandhi in 21st Century*. New Delhi: Abhijeet Publications, 2010.

Prema Kumar. *Gandhi: A Humanistic Model.* New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2010.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

UNIT 2 ROLE OF REASON AND FAITH

Contents

2.0 Objectives
2.1 Introduction
2.2 Concept Clarification
2.3 Role of Reason in Gandhi's Thought
2.4 Role of Faith in Gandhi's Thought
2.5 Relative Merits of Each
2.6 Let Us Sum Up
2.7 Key Words
2.8 Further Readings and References

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this unit is shed light on the intricate problem regarding Faith and Reason in Gandhian philosophy of religion. Generally by 'reason' is meant the act or faculty of reflecting, thinking and making inferences by which we arrive at a judgment or solution. On the contrary, faith generally, means believing something to be true and being convinced of it not because one's own reason has arrived at it but because one relies upon the credibility of another. In other words, Reason one's attempt at arriving at the truth by one's own thinking, while in Faith the testimony of someone else is taken to be sufficient for being convinced of the truth of something.

Both Reason and Faith are considered to be valid sources of knowledge. But on what grounds? What is the relative merits of the two methods of arriving at truth? These are the questions of importance for epistemology. The same questions are raised much more in philosophy of religion. Gandhi also, in his philosophy of religion, validates both Reason and Faith as authentic sources of religious experiences.

To estimate Gandhi's validation of these sources, first it may be necessary for you to get at least fairly historical overview of the concepts as developed in the classical philosophical traditions. In the light of that background then it may be easy for you to take up Gandhi's views on Reason and Faith, each separately for consideration. Finally, we will discuss the relative merits of the two. So by the end of the Unit you will be able to

- Clearly define what reason is and faith is
- Understand what Gandhi has to say on the role of Reason and Faithin religious matters
- Determine the relative merits of Reason and Faithin the Gandhian perspective

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Even in our day-to-day experiences both Reason and Faith play a vital role. Not only do we reason out by ourselves in order to arrive at the correct truths in life but we also heavily depend upon the trustworthiness of people and believe the truth of many things on their testimony. This is much more applicable in matters of religion. It has been a matter of interest among philosophers and theologians to discuss about the relative merits of each and explain the interrelationship of both. For, religious truths are usually said to be backed up by some kind of divine authority. They are usually presented in the literary forms of narrative, parable, or discourse, the truth of which people are supposed to just believe. But, rational beings as we are, normally it is not a blind faith that is expected of us. So most religions allow and even encourage some kind of rational examination of their beliefs.

The key philosophical issue regarding the problem of faith and reason is to work out how the authority of Faith and the authority of Reason interrelate in the process of justifying a religious belief, or establishing a matter of faith as a matter of truth. Gandhi, being a profound thinker and a religious man, he too has dealt with both Reason and Faith quite exhaustively. It is instructive to consider Gandhi's serious considerations of each separately and the relative roles played by them in human civilization.

2.2 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

Reason

The word 'reason', derived from the French word *'raison'* , which itself from the Latin word *'ratio'* refers to the distinctive ability of human mind to predict effects as based upon presumed causes. It is this ability which makes human beings different from the other beings. According to the ancient Greek philosophy Reason was the unique power for the pride and glory of the human beings so they defined human being as a rational being.

In medieval period greater importance was given to Faith as a source of knowledge than the role of Reason. According to St. Anselm for instance, Reason is not to pass judgment on the content of Faith but to find its meaning and give an explanation of its content. But Francis Bacon, the father of modern scientific logic, considered reason as something supported by observation about the world outside.

Thus there grew a conflict between the approach of medieval philosophy and spirit of renaissance. Hence Rene Descartes emphasized the use of Reason as a distinct tool of philosophical enquiry to free philosophy from religious dogmatism on one hand and empirical arrogance on the other. As a culmination of this trend as it were, Emmanuel Kant replaced revelation by Reason as the primary authority. He also made the same Reason the prime source of ensuring one's own freedom.

To sum up,

Reason may be defined as the human capacity for knowledge, with a threefold aspects:

(1) On the theoretical level there is the intellectual capacity to understand all that exists in some theoretical framework and in a holistic manner. It may be called **Pure Reason**

(2) At the practical level, there is the capacity to grasp what one ought to do and what one ought not to do, thereby impelling the will to do the good and refrain from doing evil. This is identified as **Practical Reason** and is used in ethical and legal perspective.

(3) Apart from these two, there is also the human capacity for empirical investigation, thereby acquiring scientific knowledge of the world outside, it may be called **Scientific Reason.**

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

Faith

The word 'faith', derived from the Latin *'fides'*, meant an active assent to the truth claims of another person, relying upon trustworthiness of that person. So faith is based not on the intrinsic evidence: mediate or immediate, but on the authority of another. In ordinary experience, Faith involves a kind of attitude of trust or assent, an act of will or a commitment on the part of the believer. Religious faith involves some kind of an implicit or explicit reference to a transcendent source. The basis for religious faith usually is understood to come from the authority of super-natural revelation.

However Faith is said to be rational if the one on whom one believes is already known to be competent and trustworthy. Faith has been considered as authentic and certain source of knowledge though it's not a compelling one. Faith is, therefore, the human capacity to believe in the truth of something which may not necessarily be rationally empirically verifiable by one's own reasoning capacity, but solely relying upon the trustworthiness of another witness. Every act of faith has two aspects: cognitive and volitional. It is cognitive in so far as it is affirmation of truth and it is volitional in as much as it is act of trust.

The relation between Faith and Reason

It has been a question of epistemological importance to discuss the relative merits of Faith and Reason. Both are inbuilt in the process of acquiring knowledge even in everyday life. It is true that human beings, in as much as self-conscious beings, are known to be distinct by their intellectual power of reasoning. However, Faith also plays an important role in acquiring ordinary knowledge, because every day-to-day truth is not acquired through objective personal verification, but is believed to be true.

Faith, as an act of the will, is indispensible for scientific knowledge too, because in every advance from sense data to perception, or from hypothesis to its observational verification or in inventing a machine, there must be not only an insight but also a sustained effort of the will to carry the process through to completion. In short then faith and reason are inter-twined sources of knowledge. Many philosophers and scientists like Karl R. Popper have acknowledged that faith as trust is fundamental to scientific knowledge.

The intertwining relationship of Faith and Reason can be seen much more in religious knowledge. In every theological reflection reason is playing an essential role because it applies an appropriate relational framework of thought to interpret the testimony of faith or revelation. Thus the early Fathers of the Church chose platonic philosophy and the scholastic philosophers of Medieval Age chose the Aristotelian philosophy. The contemporary Hermeneutics depends on the existential analysis of Heidegger as the rational framework in which God's word would be theological understood. Especially when we deal with transcendent beliefs regarding human nature, its destiny, good and evil, God's existence or non-existence, we are made aware of the limitation of reason and of the need to go beyond the empirical verification. These transcendent beliefs themselves are aides for human beings to attain transcendence. This trait of transcendence which is a defining human characteristic is a constituent part of human search for a reasonable vision that will make sense of human life, giving it the dignity that belongs to it.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is your understanding of Reason, now, ?

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………….

2) How is faith different from reason as a source of knowledge?

…………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………….

3) How are Reason and Faith intertwined with each other in acquiring scientific knowledge?

…………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………….

2.3 ROLE OF REASON IN GANDHI'S THOUGHT

Gandhi**,** like Rousseau, thought that modern civilization with its inducement to ambition and rivalry has stifled the human self. It deploys reason in the service of deception so much that conscience either connives at collective crimes or is extinguished by external powers. It transmutes reason into cunningness and induces people to change the wants into needs and crave for material happiness only. Thus modern human being is perverted; human dignity is undermined and even depraved by many strategies of hypocrisy. All this is possible only because the faculty of reason is itself ambiguous in its nature.

Gandhi establishes the ambiguity of reason by taking some concrete cases. Those who indulge in drink and free love put forward some reason or other to support their evil acts. Why? Because their reason is blurred. On such occasions, it actually follows instincts. In the midst of temptations, Gandhi says, reason is a poor criterion. It can clearly be said that it is immoral to drink liquors except as medicine. Similarly, it can be proved by cold reason that it is absolutely wrong to see any women lustfully other than one's wife However counter arguments have been advanced to support alcoholism and adultery. By way of promoting eating, drinking, sexual immorality etc., one may argue that these functions are as natural as other functions of the body hence it is our duty to develop those animal faculties to fulfillment. So according to them virtue and vice are figment human imagination, rather than absolute need of morality.

This only shows how reason can be abused. In the same way counter arguments have been advanced against the very existence of God – the sum of all that **is**. This ambiguity of reason can be resolved only by faith. So faith according to Gandhi is that which transcends reason and it is this which has been the only Rock of Ages. “My faith has saved me and is still saving me from pitfall. It has never betrayed me. It has never known to betray anyone”. Coming to their specific argument, Gandhi argues thus: If we were to put humans in the same category as the brutes, the above said functions may be considered natural. However, the human beings and the animals are two different species. Not everything that is natural to the brute can be natural to humans. Progress is characteristic of human alone not of the beasts. Reason, the power of discrimination, belongs to the human species alone; humans do not live by bread alone as the brute does. The humans use their reason to worship God and to know him and regard the attainment of that knowledge and the *summum bonum* (supreme good) of life. To those people whose end and aim is realization of God or knowledge of God, even the function of eating or drinking can be natural only within limits. They will be considered as necessary solely for sustaining the body and not for the sake of enjoyment. So restraint and renunciation have always been the watchwords in respect of these functions. Therefore, it is not the duty of humans to develop all the functions to perfection or fulfillment but their duty is to develop Godward faculties to perfection and to suppress those of contrary tendency. We have within us both good and bad desires our duty is to cultivate the good desires and to suppress the bad ones. If we fail therein we should remain brutes though born as human beings. All religions have declared human birth as a rare privilege – a state of probation if we are found wanting, according to Hinduism, we should have to be reborn as beasts.

Hence it is clear that one has to use the power of reason with great responsibility. And there is a necessity to train this faculty of reason. This faculty in the children is no doubt, asleep but we should gently coax it and awaken it and teach children habits of discipline so that their, reason being freed from the control of their senses, would become their guide right from childhood in this connection Gandhi advocates the five *Maha vratas* as a necessary equipment’s to train the reason: *Ahimsa* (Non-violence), *Satya* (Truth), *Asteya* (Non-stealing), *Aparigraga* (Non-possession), *Bramacharya* (celibacy). For the reason to be proper guide to conduct the senses it has to be pure and obedient the senses must be brought to control and subjected to the severest discipline so that they will be willing instruments at the hands of reason instead of reason being their helpless slave

Such a trained reason, according to Gandhi is a supreme criterion for deciding even the value of scriptures .The *sastras* are there only to supplement reason and not to supplant it. They would never be pleaded to defend injustice or untruth “That which is opposed to the fundamental principles of morality, to trained reason, cannot be claimed as *sastras*, no matter how ancient it maybe. Elsewhere he said I would reject all scriptural authority if in conflict with sober reason or dictates of the heart” Gandhi would not regard as revelation the collection of versus under one cover as *smrtis*. He rejects as interpolation everything in *Smrtis* or other scriptures that is inconsistent with truth, non-violence, or other fundamental or universal principles of ethics ” I exercise my judgment about every scriptures, I cannot let a scriptural text supersede my reason they are inspired but suffer from a process of double distillation:1) They come from a human prophet 2) through commentaries of interpreters. Nothing is directly from God, so cannot surrender my reason while I subscribe to revelation.

2.4 ROLE OF FAITH IN GANDHI’S THOUGHT

Gandhi was very concerned about the lack of faith among the educated youth of his time. In an address to the students' community of Mysore, once, Gandhi confessed to a deep sense of sorrow that faith was gradually disappearing in the student world. "When I suggest to a Hindu boy to have recourse to Ramanama he stares at me and wonders who Rama may be. When I ask a Mussalman boy to read the Koran and fear God, he confesses his inability to read the Koran and Allah is a mere lip-profession". As against such a situation, Gandhi upheld that the first step to a true education is a pure heart. If the education we get turned them away from God, he said "how it is going to help you and how you are going to help the world?"

There are subjects where reason cannot take us far. We have to accept things on faith. Faith does not contradict reason but transcends it. It is a kind of sixth sense, which works in cases, which are not within the preview of reason, faith is like the Himalayas which cannot possibly change. No storm can possibly remove them from their foundation. So also, faith is something that is stable and is able to solve many problems, not suppressing the reason but sanctifying it.

Faith is necessary even in everyday life. It is a requirement also for the scientist though they claim that whatever they say can be verified, yet one must have a living faith to follow the ways which they prescribe for realizing those facts .On the basis of their experimental method they do think there is nothing apart from the body and the material. From this they even they conclude faith in God is unnecessary for the progress of humanity. For such people even the weightiest argument is of no avail. You cannot make a person listen to finest music and appreciate it if he has stuffed his ears. So also, you cannot convince about an existence of living God someone who is not ready to be convinced. However, I have a living faith in a living God even as I have a living faith in many things that scientist tell me. The scientists say that their truth can be verified if one follows the ways prescribed by them for realizing those facts. This is precisely what *rishis* and the prophets also speak. Anybody who follows the path they have trodden can realize God. Unfortunately, we don't want to follow the paths nor do we take the testimony of eye-witnesses.

Fortunately, the vast majority of people do have living faith in a living God they cannot argue about it. And they will not. For them "God is". Are all the scriptures of the world old women tales of superstitions? Is the testimony of the prophets or *rishis* simply to be rejected? Is the testimony Chaitanya, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Tukaram, Dnyadeva, Ramdas, Nanak, kabir, Devendranath Tagore, Vivekanand, all modern men as well educated as the tallest among the living ones? This belief in God has to be based on faith which transcends reason

Human nature is distinguished only by the soul, the image of God. It is special creation only to the extent it is distinct from the rest of creature. Human nature is fully realized only when it ceases to be beastly or brutal. One may say human is first animal and human only afterwards the so called soul is figment of imagination but Gandhi's retort is as follows "A species is differentiated from the rest from its special characteristic. A horse is not a first animal and horse after he shares something in common with other animal but he does not shed horsiness yet remain animal. If its special virtue is lost its general status is also lost similarly if a man lost his status as man and began to grow a tail and walk on all fours, and lost the use of his reason he would have lost the status of man and also as that of animal neither the other animals will claim him as theirs so man will be classed as animals so long as he retains his humanity.

To this some people may react by referring to the Australian savages. In their ancestors time they were just like animals they had no communication except through gestures. They had no art, no literature and no science. Even now animal passions are lurking in the so called civilized people.

Our ethical code is a thin layer only. However Gandhi says that the Australian savage was fundamentally different from the brute because the brute will always remain brute while the savage had the capacity to develop the fullest height attainable. It is natural for the brute to be brutal but it will be resented by us if that adjective is applied to us, ethics requires the humans to our kingship with apes and other animals precisely because of it, it imposes a unilateral obligation upon us: Because we alone are made in the image of God. It is fact that some of us do not recognize this status. But it makes no difference except that they don't get the benefit of the status just like a lion brought up in the company of the sheep may not know its status and so does not receive its benefit yet it belongs to it. The moment it recognizes it, it begins to exercise its power over the sheep in contrast no sheep masquerading as a lion can ever attain the status of a lion to prove that man is made in the image of God it is not necessary to show that all men admittedly exhibit that image in their own persons. The great religious teachers have exhibited the image of God in their person and that is good enough.

Worship of God in the sense of acknowledging a power above and beyond us is as natural as our possession of lungs or the fact of blood circulation. Ignorant people may not acknowledge it but it is a fact. So also some people may not accept the existence of God but that does not make it false some others may worship god in crude forms bowing before the stone but Gold is gold even in its crudest form it only needs refinement so also the worship of ordinary people

Any search is possible only with some workable solution if we grant nothing we will find nothing in the case of religious search also people, since the beginning of the world have proceeded upon the assumption that if we are the God is, and that if God is not there, we are not there thus the belief in God is co-existence with the human kind such a faith in the existence of God is treated as a fact more definite that the sun is. This living faith has solved the largest number of puzzles of life it has alleviated our misery it sustains us in life it is our one solace in death. The very search for truth becomes interesting and worthwhile because of this faith. We embark upon the search because we believe that there is truth and that it can be found by diligence search and meticulous observance of the well-known and well-tried rules of the search there is no record in the history of the failure of such search even the atheist who have pretended to disbelieve in God have believed in truth the trick they have performed is that of giving God another, not a new name his name are the legion. Truth is the crown of them all.

Faith in God if it is of any worth implies the believer to resign oneself to God's will, and not be anxious about the future. If we have faith in God, we simply would not come to know beforehand how He may dispose of us. It is enough for us to hold ourselves perfectly in readiness for whatever happens. We are not allowed to know what tomorrow has in store for us and our best conceived plans have a knack very often of going awry. The highest wisdom, therefore, is never to worry about the future; but to resign ourselves entirely to His will. In this quotation it is clear that Gandhi gives an emphasis on faith and considers it as more important than the ordinary reason, which is in fact limited, and therefore calls for the role of faith. If we have faith in God we simply would not care to know beforehand how He may dispose of us. It is enough for us to hold ourselves perfectly in readiness for whatever happens. We are not allowed to know what tomorrow has in store for us and our best conceived plans have a knack very often of going awry. The highest wisdom, therefore, is never to worry about the future but to resign ourselves entirely to His Will.

Especially for a *Satyagrahi*, Gandhi made living faith as crucial. "There is no other strength for a *satyagrahi* but that of his unflinching faith in God. He has no other stay but God. One who has other stay or depends on other help cannot offer *satyagarahi*. He may be a passive resister, non-cooperator and so on but not a *satyagrahi*. That faith is of little value which can flourish only in fair weather in order to be of any value it has to survive the severest trails. The month before the inauguration of Civil Disobedience campaign the Satyagraha Ashram was put into severe trail. The test came in the form of epidemic of small pox. It carried away three promising children of the Ashram. Gandhi of all persons had to go through heart searching: whether to vaccinate the inmates, which he had been against it because he had considered it as harmful in the end, little short of taking beef. He had instead tried only hydropathy and earth treatment with success in numerous cases. But that month seemed to fail. Does this mean that I must therefore lose faith in the treatment and faith in God? Or will I preserve in my faith? Finally, Gandhi said openly in the prayer meeting: I want you to understand that this epidemic is not a scourge, but a trial and preparation to chain us more strongly and firmly to faith in God. It is as clear to me as daylight that life and death are but phases of the same thing, the reverse and obverse of the same coin. What is life worth without trials which are salt of life? What is Ramayana but a record of trails a, privations and penances of Rama and Sita. I want you all to treasure death and suffering more than life and to appreciate their cleansing and purifying character.

Here again Gandhi relies upon the faith of great people who had stood the trail. The greatest men of the world have always stood alone. Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed. In his flight Prophet Mohammed was accompanied by his faithful companion Abu Bakr. As they were chased by numerous enemies, at one point Abu Bekr exclaimed to the Prophet: “I am trembling to think of our fate. Look at the number of the enemies. What shall we two do against these heavy odds?” Without a moment’s reflection the Prophet rebuked him “No Abu Bakr, We are three, for God is with us”. Citing the invincible faith of Vibhisan and Prahlad, Gandhi to student community of Rhastriya Vidyapith at Banara: “I want you to have that same living faith in yourselves and God”

By this Gandhi did not mean that all should believe in the God that he believed in. He readily granted to others thus: “May be your definition of God is different from mine, but your belief in that God might be your ultimate mainstay. It may be some Supreme Power or some Being even indefinable, but belief in it is indispensable. To bear all kinds of tortures without a murmur of resentment is impossible for a human being without the strength that comes from God. Only in his strength we are strong. And only those who can cast their cares and their fears on that Immeasurable Power have faith in God.” Taking the allegory of the elephant king, Gajendra and the alligator Graha as an example, Gandhi said: The moral of the story is that God never fails his devotees in the hour of trail. The condition is that there must be a living faith in and the uttermost reliance on Him. The test of faith is that having done our duty we must be prepared to welcome whatever He may send—joy as well as sorrow, good luck as well as bad…. If mishaps do come he will not bewail his fate but bear it with an undisturbed peace of mind and joyous resignation to His will. It was only when the tip of his trunk left above water, he invoked God. And God too heard his prayers and helped him. So Gandhi could powerfully say: “When I am weak, then I am strong”

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Why does Gandhi think that reason is ambiguous and how can it be trained?

……………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………….

2) Why does Gandhi say reason is supreme authority in judging the shastras?

………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………….

3) How does Gandhi establish faith as a sure means of knowledge?

………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………….

4) What are the ways by which one can test the faith ?

…………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………….

2.5 RELATIVE MERITS OF EACH

Some have held that Faith and Reason are two separate sources in conflict with each other over certain propositions or methodologies. In this conflict which is to prevail over the other? Regarding this there has been disagreement among philosophers. John Locke held that though faith and reason have “strict” distinct provinces, faith must be in accord with reason. Faith cannot convince us of something which contradicts our knowledge. But propositions of faith are, nonetheless, understood to be “above reason.”

But others like Kierkegaard would prioritize faith even to the point of making it irrational. While dealing with ‘leap of faith’ (the act of believing in or accepting something intangible or unprovable, or without empirical evidence), Kierkegaard stressed that the core part of the leap of faith, is the leap. Using the famous story of Adam and Eve, he says, Adam's leap signifies a change from one quality to another, mainly the quality of possessing no sin to the quality of possessing sin. Kierkegaard maintains that the transition from one quality to another can take place only by a "leap". This leap is thus associated with "blind faith". Nevertheless, given the conception of a God who unconditionally accepts humans and that faith itself is a gift from God, one reaches the highest moral position when a person realizes this and, no longer depends upon oneself, but takes the leap of faith into the arms of a loving God.

The second of philosophers have maintained Faith and Reason are two distinct sources, having no conflict at all between the two. Neither will produce contradictory or contrary claims which are competing over those of the other. If at all there arises a conflict between their claims then, then they say that that conflict is only apparent, and it should be resolved on the side of faith if the claim in question is a religious or theological. It should be resolved on the side of reason when the disputed claim is with regard to empirical or logical matters.

There are still other philosophers, most notably the logical positivists, who have denied the very existence of a separate area of thought or human existence rightly governed by faith. According to them, only those ideas and statements that are accessible to thorough verification by reason are meaningful. This position of the contemporary philosophers has presented a challenge to religious thinkers to explain how the admittedly non-rational or trans-rational matters of religion can be said to hold meaningful cognitive content.

One significant reaction against logical positivism stemmed from Ludwig Wittgenstein. He argued that there is something unique about the linguistic framework of religious believers. Their language makes little sense to outsiders. So they need to share in their form of life in order to understand the way the various concepts function in their language games. The various language games form a kind of “family resemblance.”

So according to Wittgenstein those who demand an impartial way of assessing the truth value of a religious claim are asking for something impossible. Science and religion are just two different types of language games. This demand to take on an internal perspective in order to assess religious beliefs commits Wittgenstein to a form of incompatibilism between Faith and Reason. Though this entails that religious beliefs are essentially groundless, one can point out that in everyday life too there are such countless beliefs as the belief in the permanence of our objects of perception, in the uniformity of nature, and even in our knowledge of our own intentions. Wittgenstein claimed that proofs for God’s existence have little to do with actual belief in God. They neither show us God in the way a sense impression shows us an object, nor do they give rise to conjectures about him. Experiences, thoughts–life can force this concept on us. He did think that life itself could “educate” us about God’s existence.

Taking the clue from this, Hick argues for the importance of rational certainty in faith. He posits that there are as many types of grounds for rational certainty as there are kinds of objects of knowledge. He claims that religious beliefs share several crucial features with any empirical claim: they are propositional; they are objects of assent; an agent can have dispositions to act upon them; and we feel convictions for them when they are challenged. Nonetheless, Hick realizes that there are important ways in which sense beliefs and religious beliefs are distinct: sense perception is coercive, while religious perception is not; sense perception is universal, while religious is not; and sense perception is highly coherent within space and time, while religious awareness among different individuals is not. In fact, it may in fact be rational for a person who has not had experiences that compel belief to withhold belief in God.

From these similarities and differences between faith-claims and claims of reason, Hick concludes that religious faith is the non-inferential and improvable basic interpretation either of a moral or religious “situational significance” in human experience. Faith is not the result of logical reasoning, but rather a profession that God “as a living being” has entered into the believer’s experience. This act of faith situates itself in the person’s material and social environment. Religious faith interprets reality in terms of the divine presence within the believer’s human experience. Although the person of faith may be unable to prove or explain this divine presence, his or her religious belief still acquire the status of knowledge similar to that of scientific and moral claims. Thus even if one could prove God’s existence, this fact alone would be a form of knowledge neither necessary nor sufficient for one’s faith. It would at best only force a notional assent. Believers live by not by confirmed hypotheses, but by an intense, coercive, indubitable experience of the divine.

Now, Gandhi speaks of faith as flowing from the transcendental trait that is essential part of human nature. It is constituent dimension of human nature. Unless we exercise it and bring to completion, the so-called human has the danger of degrading to a level far below the level of animal passions. However, Gandhi assigns Reason its due role. He even gives a supreme authority to Reason as far as it has a role in assessing the moral dimension of the religion, and even in deciding the truth-value of what went in the name of Revelation. At the same time, Gandhi accepted the ambiguous character of human reason, as it is caught between the animal instincts and the image of God. As such reason cannot be relied upon as a defining characteristic of being human. So he emphasized the need for reason to go beyond itself and give room for transcending to the realm of faith. He also equally stressed the need of training Reason and controlling it. In bringing out the transcendental dimension to fulfillment, only Faith has a role to play and reason has to play a role that is subservient to faith and supportive of faith. In this, Gandhi has made room for faith to realize the human transcendence.

Conclusion

Both Faith and Reason are two authentic sources of human knowledge. With the emergence of self-consciousness in the human species, the faculty of Reason begins to operate especially in determining the choices. However, we cannot reason out all things on earth, nor wait to start to act until we have reasoned securely for the choice of a particular action. There is another faculty called Faith. It is the precondition of all systematic knowing, purposive doing and transcendent living. Gandhi accepted validity of both each in its respective fields and each penetrating into each other’s, and complementing each other.

Gandhi set great value upon reason's drive to attain goals, which render people's lives ever more worthy. Even in the realm of religion, Gandhi sees Reason as very helpful to purify mythological notions of God and the superstitious elements of religions and reject interpolations of scriptures. In this, he sees that Reason could contribute to the understanding of divine Revelation. Religion therefore need not entertain any fear of Reason, but should seek out Reason and have trust in it.

But at the same time Gandhi equally emphasized that Faith could build upon the Reason and brings it to fulfillment, by shedding light on the possible abuses from Reason and could free it from its fragility and limitations. But he was clear about the patent inadequacy of perspectives in which the ephemeral is affirmed as a value and the possibility of discovering the real meaning of life is cast into doubt. That is why, the modern civilization, according to Gandhi, stumbles through life to the very edge of the abyss without knowing where it is going. It is satisfied with preferring quick success to the toil of patient enquiry into what makes life worth living, no longer looking to transcendent dimensions of human existence. It is there Gandhi to openly and boldly points out the misdirection of the modern civilization and corrects it by giving due importance to Faith, without at the same time ignoring the importance due to Reason.

2.6 LET US SUM UP

I. 1.After clarifying the precise meanings of Reason and Faith, we tried to assess the relative authority of Faith and the authority of Reason and examine whether they interrelate in the process of justifying a religious belief, or establishing a matter of faith as a matter of truth.

Reason is specifically a human faculty of reflecting, thinking and making inferences by which we arrive at a judgment or solution. This power can be distinguished in three distinct ways: (1) Purely from a theoretical standpoint, it is **Pure Reason** (the intellectual capacity to understand all that exists in some theoretical framework and in a holistic manner). (2) From the practical point of view or in the ethical and legal perspectives it is called **Practical Reason** (the capacity to grasp what one ought to do and what one ought not to do, thereby impelling the will to do the good and refrain from doing evil). (3) From the angle of empirical investigation it is **Scientific Reason** is the capacity for acquiring scientific knowledge of the world outside.

Faith is the human capacity to believe in the truth of something which may not necessarily be rationally or empirically verifiable by one's own reasoning capacity, but solely relying upon the trustworthiness of another witness. It is distinct from reason in this that it arrives at the truth by relying upon the credibility of another. One's own reasoning power is not exercised directly on the arriving at the truth. Faith plays an important role not only in everyday life and in scientific inquiry, but more in the matters of religion.

3. Very often science boasts of its verification method as superior to religious method of faith. However, Faith, as an act of the will, is indispensible even for scientific knowledge. Every advance from sense data to perception, or from hypothesis to verification there must be not only an insight but also a sustained effort of the will to carry the process through to completion. Thus faith and reason are inter-twined sources of knowledge

II. 1. Reason is ambiguous, and can easily be lured and abused by the animal appetites in human beings. For example it can be proved by reason that drinking is evil or that it is wrong to see any women lustfully other than one's wife. However, counter arguments have been advanced to support alcoholism and adultery. This ambiguity of reason can be resolved only by faith. So faith according to Gandhi is that which transcends reason. It is this which has been the only Rock of Ages. All the great prophets, sages and founders of religions have based themselves on Faith much more than Reason.

There is already inbuilt mechanism in us namely conscience with the help of which we can use reason with responsibility, controlling it from support the animal instincts. We have within us both good and bad desires our duty is to cultivate the good desires and to suppress the bad ones. If we fail therein we should remain brutes though born as human beings. All religions have declared human birth as a rare privilege –a state of probation. If we want to successfully come out of the probation, then we the need to train Reason and discipline it. In this connection, Gandhi's emphasizes on practice of *vratas*.

2. Gandhi assigns to the trained Reason a supreme role in deciding passage of scriptures to be true or merely an interpolation. For revelation that the scriptures are said to have is first received through human media only. Further it has been commented upon. So, anything that is passed through the human medium is bound to be imperfect. So Reason has to be applied any passage to see whether immorality is taught in any passage. If so, it must be rejected as interpolation.

3. There are many things in our day to day life which we take only on faith. This itself is a sure means of obtaining knowledge. Even in science faith is used as a means, Gandhi says. For the

scientists say that their truth can be verified if one follows the ways prescribed by them for realizing those facts. In parallel lines Gandhi argues that Faith is nothing but following the path trodden by *rishis* and the prophets, and thereby realizing God. Further, to have a living faith implies that the believer resigns oneself to God’s will, without being worried about whatever happens. Citing the invincible faith of testimony Zoraster, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed, Chaitanya, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Tukaram, Dnyadeva, Ramdas, Nanak, kabir, Devendranath Tagore, Vivekanand Vibhisan and Prahlad, Gandhi affirms the role of faith in resigning oneself on God and thereby attaining the desired Perfection, Transcendence or going beyond the imperfections of self and transience of life.

2.7 KEY WORDS

Reason, the three kinds of Reason, Faith, Ambiguous role of Reason, Training of Reason, Vratas, Living faith, Rshis and Prophets, leap of faith, Logical positivism, the language games, transcendence,

2.8 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

George Panthanmackel, “Faith,” *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Vol.1. Bengalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2010, pp. 524-528

John D. Romus, ”Faith and reason,” *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Vol.1. Bengalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2010, pp. 528-532

Y.S Gowramma, “Reason,” *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Vol.2. Bengalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2010, pp. 1148-1151

Gandhi, M.K. *In Search of the Supreme*. Ed. V.B. Kher. Vol.1. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1961.

Harijan, The Weekly edited by Gandhi.

Young India, The Weekly edited by Gandhi.

UNIT 3 RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AND ASHRAM LIFE

Contents

3.0 Objectives
3.1 Introduction
3.2 Gandhi's Religious Experience in its Preparatory Phase
3.3 Religious Experience in its Maturity
3.4 The Ashram Life: A Historical Overview
3.5 Ashram Life in the Rules
3.6 Let Us Sum Up
3.7 Key Words
3.8 Further Readings and References

3.0 OBJECTIVES

Undoubtedly Gandhi's whole life and work was fundamentally spiritual. One reason for his spiritual outlook was the religious atmosphere in which he was brought up at home. Another important reason is the religious experience he cherished all through his life. Above all, his Ashram life played a key role in the making of his religious experience. That in turn prepared him to involve himself in his various political activities in a saintly way. It is of supreme significance for you to identify what his religious experience is, and specify the role ashram life in Gandhi's life and mission. So this Unit will help you

- To understand the different stages of his religious experience
- To grasp the core aspect of that religious experience
- To know the role of his ashram life in his religious experience
- To appreciate the value of the vows of his ashram life

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Gandhi was deeply a religious person, showing keen on spiritual pursuit. The many liberation-struggles he undertook in South Africa as well as in India were steered by his spiritual outlook only. Even the reform programmes he initiated in the Indian society before the Independence were all guided by his spiritual ideas and ideals. The spiritual vision of life will be clear from his words found in the Introduction of his *Autobiography*: "What I want to achieve – what I have been pinning and striving to achieve these thirty years – is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain 'Moksha', I live and move and have my being, in the pursuit of this goal. All that I do by way of speaking and writing, and all my ventures in the political field are directed to this end."

However, Gandhi's religious experience was not a single and specific experience that occurred at one moment of life. It was rather a life-long experience that permeated into all aspects of life: family, profession, politics, policies, programme etc. He had a scientific bent of mind so as to experiment anything that came on his way. He would not simply accept any events or experiences without assessing each one of them. Whatever he studied about religion, say about God, religion, plurality of religions etc. was all put to test by Gandhi in his life. Whatever he leant from various kinds of Holy Scriptures was put into practice. The sole aim of all these experiments was to transform his life and of improve the life of humanity, to see God face to face.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

Thus, he developed a constantly evolving set of beliefs and principles that guided his behavior not only in his personal and family life but also in all his social and political activities. When Gandhi happened to go to South Africa, he was touched by the deepest sorrow of the Indian laborers. He became so restless that he plunged into action to remove the injustice they were suffering the colour discrimination by the British. Gandhi's heart was burning with such a living flame of God's love that he decided to light up not only the hearts of the oppressed but also the heart the oppressors. Hence, he discovered a very new way of fighting for justice, which he called Satyagraha. It is the same method that he would use later during the freedom struggle to get not only the political independence but also bring about socio-economic reforms in India.

Gandhi was thus able to apply the soul-force to the removal of all sorts of problems at the political, social and economics because he had already realized a personal synthesis of all that he had learnt about religion, religions with all aspects of life. But Gandhi was able to arrive at such a profound synthesis only because many factors of his early life had prepared him for it. Unless you know those factors, you will not be in a position to understand the unique religious experience of Gandhi. Further, of course you will have to analyse the specific features of that religious experience which Gandhi manifested in later part of life. Apart from these two broad phases of his religious experience, it is also important to study the significance of his Ashram life separately.

3.2 GANDHI'S RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE IN ITS PREPARATORY PHASE

In this section, you are going to analyze the various factors that were at work in the making of Gandhi's religious experience. First, it was his family background contributed to the religious experience of the later Mahatma. Gandhi's father Kaba Gandhi was the Prime Minister of the state of Porbandar, one of the small princely states of Kathiawad in Gujarath. He was known for uprightness of character and strict impartiality of administration. So there prevailed in his home an atmosphere of discipline. The mother, Putlibai, was a pious and devout woman. Going to the temple was one of her daily duties. She would not think of taking her meals without her daily prayers. She was known for ascetic practices of faith, too. She would take the hardest vows and adhere to them unflinchingly. For instance during the four months period of rainy season she would vow to herself not to take meals without worshiping the sun-god and having a *darshan* of his. Sometimes for days the sun may not appear. In addition, she would go fasting on all those days. The sons would stand outside the house to see whether the sun appears. When it appeared, they would call out the mother. By the time, she came, if the sun was hidden by clouds again, she would simply say: "May be, Lord does not want me to eat today". Thus, the boy Mohandas grew in a religious atmosphere. He understood the meaning of prayer, self-control, and discipline.

Besides there were two plays which left an indelible mark on the young boy. Once he happened to watch the play "Shravana Pitribhakti Nataka". He was so much impressed by Shravana's sacrificial devotion towards his blind parents that Gandhi developed a great attachment to parents. Thus he imbibed many of their good qualities of the parents unconsciously. Another play that influenced him very much was the Harichandra Story. After watching the play of Harichandra, he asked himself: "Why should not all be truthful like him? He thought about it day and night. Finally as for himself, he decided he would always play the role of Harichandra. His one ideal was to follow the path truth and go through all the ordeals Harichandra went through. Thus there arose gradually but definitely a quest for truth, and ardent desire to see the role of the Spirit within self.

There were quite a few painful things that the boy had to face in his early life but each event taught him a great lesson which enabled him to understand life better. One such painful thing was that he got into a bad friendship with a fellow student. In fact his elder brother, his mother and wife warned him about him. But Gandhi assured them that he would change him into good by his friendship with him. He never knew that "one takes in vice far more readily than virtue". In his company, he took to meat-eating. His argument was English men were strong because they eat meat. Therefore, he thought that it was his duty, as patriot, to become strong through meat-eating. But, since his family was practicing vegetarian orthodox culture, his friend helped him to eat meat secretly. However, Gandhi could not continue the practice for long because whenever he took mutton outside he was not inclined to take his meals at home. When his mother asked for the reason, he had to lie to her that he was not hungry or that he had some indigestion problems. However, it was very painful for him to deceive his mother in that way.

Another painful experience was the habit of smoking. It all began with his wonder how his uncle could emit clouds out of his lips. He would pick up the stumps of cigarettes thrown away by him and imitate him secretly. Then he began smoking with his friend. Not satisfied, he stole from the servant's pocket money to buy more. On another occasion, Gandhi stole to pay off the debt of his brother by chipping off a bit of gold armlet of another brother. All this resulted in a lot of prick of conscience in the tender boy. On the other hand, he and his friend thought that their freedom was curtailed by the varied restrictions imposed by the elders. They felt that they could not do anything of their own choice. So they even attempted at suicide. However, even to do it they needed a lot of courage. So Gandhi went to a temple nearly first to pray and then drink the poisonous juice.

Nevertheless, there he was moved by an inner voice that if he made confession of his sins to his father, things would be all right. He too responded to that call positively. He made a sincere confession to his father, by writing everything, along with the promise never to commit a sin again. Having read this, his father burst into tears and forgave Gandhi unconditionally. This not only changed Gandhi completely but also became the foundation for his later discovery of the path of truth and nonviolence. He understood that truth is the essence of nonviolence.

Apart from these factors that contributed to his religious upbringing, the young boy was in a sense prepared for an interreligious experience too. They belonged to Vaishnavite family which was open to Saivism, as well as to Jainism and Buddhism. He kept a very open household in terms of religion. Men of many religious traditions Jain monks used to visit his house and even have meals in their house. His father had some Muslim and Parsi friends with whom he engaged himself in dialogue on religious topics. In addition, the boy, as he was nursing the father would be listening to them all. He gained a good knowledge of all these religions except Christianity. These things combined inculcated in the young Gandhi a tolerance for all faiths. He would respect them all as seekers after truth, all in their own ways. The Jain tradition was particularly strong in the area, and its emphasis on *ahimsa* (doing no harm) and its doctrine of *anekantavada* the many-sidedness of truth became very important to Gandhi later in life.

The only religion that he learned to think poorly of, during his youth, was Christianity. Once he happened to hear some Christians missionaries who preached in a street corner, abused Hindus and their gods. He also heard a rumor in the town that a well known Hindu after conversion to Christianity, had to eat beef, drink liquor and wear European costumes and had already abused Hindu gods and customs. All these things created in him a dislike for Christianity. However, he changed his opinions when he went to London for his barrister studies. Gandhi's real contact with Christianity began in England during his law studies in 1888, where he was introduced to various books including the Bible by a good Christian form Manchester. As he was reading the Bible he did not come across any passage that advocated meat eating and drinking. Gandhi read the whole of the Bible. He could not relish reading the Old Testament but the New Testament produced a different impression, which lasted till his death.

This contact with Christianity was much deepened in South Africa. He had to work with Muslims. In fact he went there on a contract to work for the Muslim’s firm only. Thus in his friendship with good Muslims, he came to know about Islam. At the same time Gandhi came in contact with many excellent Christians who also influenced him to get converted to their religions. At one point, Gandhi thought of even embracing another religion. ‘But to which religion?’ was the question he was unable to settle, easily. He consulted certain Jain merchant by name Rai Chandbai who, Gandhi thought, was a highly spiritually enlightened person. He wrote to him about his dilemma. He wrote to Gandhi whether he had really studied about his own religion and whether there was anything, it could not be fulfilled. In addition, he had sent several books on Hinduism. He began to study them all deeply. Because of a deeper study he, finally arrived at certain conclusion regarding what religion means and religions are.

Gandhi’s basic insight on the meaning of religion is this: Religion is really that which changes our very nature, by binding us indissolubly to the truth within. It goes on purifying us and making us perfect. Religion is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself, known its Maker, and appreciated the true correspondence between the Maker and itself. It enables one to strive after Truth. It makes us follow morality, at its minimum, but really, it trains us to go through a self-purification process in thought, word and action.

So according to Gandhi the core of religion is morality. He said that true religion and true morality are bound up with each other. Morality is the essence of religion. When morality incarnates itself in a living person it becomes religion, because, it binds, it holds, it sustains him in hours of trial. Religion is to morality what water is to the seed that is sown in the soil. Gandhi would even say that religion and morality are identical. A religion is religion only because it has evolved out of a person or persons who realized the Truth and because it continues to teach fundamental morality to its followers and to provide them with means for self-purification.

As regards religious plurality, Gandhi realized that it is a human necessity arising out of the differences in temperaments of the person of the Attainment. When he grasps the Truth, and explains it to his followers, he will be able to do it only in the language he knows, using the cultural moulds and according to the climatic conditions of the place and historical contexts of the peoples. Further, it is explained and interpreted by commentators; it would have its own accretions added to the original truth. Thus every religion is imperfect while being true as well. There is no one religion, which is all-true. Nor is any one religion, which is all-false. There is no question of superiority / inferiority between religions.

Every religion is valid to its own followers in as much as it fulfills the felt need of humanity, but every religion also has the obligation to move from imperfection to perfection constantly. And that they are all fundamentally the same. Moreover, that his own native religion was not only as good as any other religion, but even more helpful because of the hereditary influences and congenial atmosphere. In other words, he became clear that there was no need of conversion in the accepted sense of the term. Thus he became confirmed Hindu by convictions.

3.3 RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE IN ITS MATURITY

After taking his decision to remain a Hindu, Gandhi stuck up to it, until the end of his life. He remained a Hindu. He even openly confessed his devotion and attachment to Hinduism. “I can no more describe my feeling for Hinduism than for my own wife. She moves me as no other woman in the world can”. Not that he was not aware of its faults. Even so he felt for and about Hinduism with all its faults and limitations. Nothing else elated him so much as the music of the *Gita* or the *Ramayana* of Tulsidas.

That did not mean that Gandhi’s religious experience was restricted to the sources of Hinduism only. His was a highly personal synthesis of diverse elements to which his reading of the Bible and contact with Christians had contributed substantially. His contact with good Christians during the most impressionable years of his life in London had such a long lasting effect on his personality. “The spirit of the Sermon on the Mount competes almost on equal terms with the *Bhagavad Gita* for the domination of my heart,” he said in 1916. Later in 1920, he said, “Christ’s Sermon on the Mount fills me with bliss even today. Its sweet verses have even today the power to quench my agony of the soul.” He had many intimate friends from all religions but especially from Christianity. Mr. Paul, a Roman Catholic, a court interpreter, Mr. Subhan Godgrey, then a teacher under the Protestant Mission. Rev. Joseph D Doke, a Baptist minister, who had sympathetic outlook on Gandhi’s Passive Resistance movement, and who became Gandhiji’s first biographer, Mr. A W Baker who, besides being an attorney, was a staunch lay preacher. He had Gandhi to attend for a prayer meeting in Mr. Baker’s office during lunch break attending the prayer meeting for some time. There he met many Christians. One of them was Plymouth Brethren. Rev. C.F Andrews was another Christian to whom Gandhi developed a lasting friendship, who called him ‘Charlie’. They met towards the end of the passive resistance struggle in Natal. Their friendship grew with mutual admiration and affection, and lasted until the sudden death of Andrew’s in 1942. Gandhi learnt some favorites Christian hymns: ‘Lead Kindly Light’, ‘When I Survey the Wondrous Cross’, ‘nearer my God to Thee’, ‘Abide with Me’, and ‘Rock of Ages’.

Gandhi was not only convinced of the fact that his reading of other sacred books had enriched him, but also others would be equally enriched likewise. So he held that “it is the duty of every cultured man or woman to read sympathetically the Scriptures of the world. If we are to respect others’ religions as we would have them to respect our own, a friendly study of the world’s religions is a sacred duty. As he had to work with people of different religions, he began to cultivate interreligious collaboration not only for pragmatic reasons but also at the very fundamental level of religious experience. That in turn enabled him to develop deep trans-religious experience as well as formulate a trans-religious concept of God, spirituality

Thus, Gandhi derived inspiration from both Hindu and Christian traditions, without being exclusively dominated by either of the two. Gandhi’s study of Christianity had influenced his idea about God, soul and nature. For Gandhi, however, this knowledge was the goal of the quest rather than its beginning. His religious conviction grew not through study and reflection but under compulsion of action. He went to the scripture to seek guidance whenever he was in his moral and ethical perplexities and accepted from them only so much as helped him to see his path in life.

Gandhi was critical of certain features of Christianity as practiced in the West, which, he thought, were denial of the true spirit of Jesus. He could not accept the view that Christianity was the only true religion or that the Bible was the only true revelation. He could not accept the narrow understanding of Jesus as the only begotten son, unique savior etc. He criticized the humanitarian work of missionaries as baits for conversion. He condemned the conversion of

Harijans in particular. However, Gandhi maintained that conversion in the sense of self-purification and self-realization was vital for every religious community.

Gandhi had a deep reverence for Jesus Christ. He was indeed the unfailing inspiration for humankind and a supreme exemplar of *satyagraha*. Jesus' teaching on the universal love, and forgiveness even of the enemies were the core of human progress. Especially the Kingdom of God appealed to him in a very great deal. On the personal side, the ideal of Kingdom of God inspired him to work for it as a means of personal salvation. So Gandhi said, I am not fighting for any earthly kingdom. "For me the road of salvation lays through incessant toil kin the service of my country and humanity. Gandhi was very much touched by Jesus' words: "It profited nothing if one gained the whole world and lost his soul". Therefore, he attached importance to soul, as the governing principle of human nature and the hallmark of the truth of human beings. To live up to the dictates of the indwelling spirit was indeed the 'truth' of human beings at the personal level.

On the social side, Gandhi viewed 'the kingdom of God' as the ideal society based upon justice even unto this last. He did not believe that his spirituality consisted in simply in turning away from poverty, misery, ignorance but in fully facing the unjust structures that produced them and fighting against them. Moreover, even in fighting against them, Gandhi thought, one has to use love as the main principle, pray for those whom one fights against, and transform the existing customs, institutions and making them into true vehicle of love. In fact, the Sermon on the Mount awakened in Gandhi the value of Passive Resistance. Though I cannot claim to be a Christian in the sectarian sensed of the term, the example of Jesus' suffering is a factor in the composition of my undying faith in non-violence which rules all my actions – worldly or temporal… Jesus lived and dies in vain if he did not teach us to regulate the whole of life by the eternal law of love." It is the potency and practicability of the method of the cross that Gandhi demonstrated in his Satyagraha method. In addition, he made it into such an irresistible political instrument for obtaining social justice that even the most unscrupulous enemy had to reckon with it a great soul force of love.

Even as Gandhi appreciated the truth in other religions, and learn from it, yet he also related those truths to his own Hindu basics. He saw in the Cross an explication of the Hindu concept of Ahimsa. It was simply a negative concept of non-killing or non-violence, but positively love. That love, according to Gandhi, was to be shown even to the enemies because he too is created in the image of God, and is possessing soul-dimension, which indeed constitutes the truth of human being. Gandhi began to see this truth dimension of the humans in terms of the Hindu terminology *satya* which itself derived from *'Sat'* the principle of Being, the one all-embracing Ground of Being, either in the form of personal God, *Ishwara*, or the eternal Law that governs the whole of the cosmos. In this perspective, then, it was easy for Gandhi to reject such evils of caste system, Untouchability, gender discrimination, the passive understanding of *karma* theory, leading to fatalism, as simply degradations of the true religious spirit. Whatever contradicted morality and purity was to be rejected although a *sastra* may sanction it.

Gandhi loved to be called a Hindu. He had to even stake his claim that he was a Sanatani Hindu, because he believed in the Vedas, Upanishads, *Puranas*. He even wrote a commentary on *Gita* like any major reformer. He believed in *Varnashrama dharma* of the pure type, not in the popular and degraded form. He believed in the protection of the cow in its much larger sense of itself being the symbol of ecological one-ness, became an able reformer of Hinduism. However, he did not observe the Hindu ceremonials or holy days. He rarely visited temple except for courtesy. However, he did not disbelieve in idol worship. Gandhi did not consider that religion was to be practiced on a mountain top in a cave of the Himalaya, or in the banks of the river Ganges, but as it manifest itself in all the actions of humans in society. Though he accepted the value of such props as idol worship and going to temple object for those people who find them useful, he was himself not keen on using them.

Gandhi was trying to be *karmayogi*, as described in the *Gita*. Accordingly he was keen on performing all the good works in the spirit of sacrifice to the 'God of humanity' particularly serving the *Daridranarayana*, the God of the poor and the downtrodden, without attachment, without hankering after the desired results and with equanimity. The core of religion consists in morality. Religion and Morality for Gandhi were interchangeable terms. Similarly, God and Truth in the sense of moral law are interchangeable. Therefore, he could easily convert the usual understanding 'God is truth' into his own formulation 'Truth is God'. The basic principles of this morality were truth and non-violence. These two principals were elaborated into eleven principles. Which we will see later section in this Unit itself.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Did Gandhi have any religious experience at all? If so, specify what sort of religious experience it was?

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

2) What were the factors that contributed to Gandhi's religious experience?

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………….

3) The core of Gandhi's religious experience?

…………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

4) How does Gandhi distinguish religion and religions?

…………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………….

3.4 THE ASHRAM LIFE: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

By 'ashram' in the Hindu tradition is meant 'a house where a true Guru is living and teaching God-seekers seeking spiritual advice and help'. It is a simple community-living, oriented to spiritual discipline and God-realization. But Ashram, as founded by Gandhi, meant a residential work centre for those who have dedicated themselves for an integral life of *satyagraha*, and were totally committed to the principles of non-violence as a creed.

Right from the beginning of his public ministry that he started in South Africa, he had been living an ashram life. For, besides the members of his family, there were Gandhi's friends and fellow workers who were living with him and whose relation with him was spiritual from the first or became such later on. This went on unconsciously for quite some time. However in the course of time Gandhi founded formally four types of Ashrams.

1. Pheonix Settlement

When Gandhi in South Africa read Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, in 1904, he was so much impressed by the contents of the book that he decided to live with the workers of *Indian Opinion* as members of his family. He purchased 100 acres of land and founded Phoenix Settlement. Neither he nor others called it an ashram. It had a religious basis, but the visible object was purity of body and mind as well as economic equality. The coworkers would live as family men and have children. This was the first step.

In 1906, when he launched out formally the Satyagraha, movement, he made it clear that it was based on religion and implied an unshakable faith in the God of Truth. Here religion did not mean the narrow and sectarian sense, but as that which acts as a link between different religions and realizes their essential unity. Gandhi says that he learnt from experience that *brahmacharya* was a sine qua non for a life devoted to service. From that time onward Gandhi looked upon Phoenix deliberately as a religious institution. Thus it was progressing as an ashram though he did not call it by that name. This went on till 1911.

2. Tolstoy Farm

In 1911as a part of the Satyagraha movement, Gandhi and his coworkers felt the need of an ashram where *Satyagrahi* families could live and lead a religious life. Gandhi's close friend a German architect by name Kallenbach who was also very religious minded, and who was living a sort of ashram life, leading a comparatively a simple life purchased a farm of 1,100 acres for settling the *satyagrahi* families. The whole institution was managed from a religious point of view. Among the settlers thee were Hindus, Mussalmans, Christians and Parsis. And each was staunch in his own faith. Yet they had never quarreled with one another. They respected one another's religion and tried to help everybody to follow his own faith and thus to make spiritual progress. Even this institution was not called Ashram but as Tolstoy Farm. They both were followers of Tolstoy, trying to practice his doctrines.

In 1912, when the Tolstoy Farm was closed, the farmers were sent to Phoenix, which was no longer meant for the Indian Opinion workers only. As at Tolstoy Farm, here also Gandhi established a common kitchen which some joined, while others had private kitchen. But congregational prayers in the evening was introduced. And the final Satyagraha campaign in 1913 was started by the inmates of Phoenix Settlement. And the struggle ended successfully in 1914. And it was decided that all settlers who wanted to go to India should be enabled to go there.

3. Satyagraha Ashram

According to the decision taken early, Gandhi on his return to India early in 1915, came with a view to establish an ashram life so as to continue the communal life commenced in South Africa. And as Gandhi toured all parts of India for a year, he was invited by several cities to establish the ashram in their neighbourhood with a promise of assistance. Finally Ahmedabad was selected. That was the fourth and the last step. With full discussion and correspondence with friends, finally he decided to call the institution Satyagraha Ashram, because his life was devoted to the quest of truth, and he was wanting to live and if need be die in the pursuit of the same with as many fellow pilgrims as he could get. It was on May 25, 1915 the Satyagraha Ashram was established in a rented house at Kochrab because of the volunteering help to finance it. Later on account of his unwavering attitude to Removal of Untouchability, he had to vacate it all of a sudden, relying only on the Providence. And God too was kind to the Ashramites. They moved to banks of the Sabarmati River in Ahmedabad, where the ashram life became stable and steady, destined to steer the destiny of the nation.

The ashram life at the beginning consisted of hand weaving as the main industry, and carpentry as accessory to it. No servants were engaged. So cooking, sanitation, fetching water everything was attended to by the Ashramites. Truth and other observances were obligatory. Eradication of Untouchability, emancipation of women from the age old discrimination, Respect of religions, vegetarianism not only as a means of control of palate but also as a mark of identification with the poor and as the experimenting on the best way of perfect health.

In fine, the Ashram set out to remedy what it thought were defects in our national life from the religious, economic and political standpoints. It may not have embarked on all possible activities that Gandhi thought of. However, Gandhi did not go in search of new spheres of activity, but if any activity naturally suggested itself to our minds, he should go in for it without accounting the cost. Gandhi was also keen on managing with what funds were placed at his disposal by friends without any special effort in collection. These were certainly 2 limitations of the Ashram.

However, these two limitations sprang from the religious attitude Gandhi. As such therefore they reveal the religious experience of the Ashram life too. It implies a strong faith in God, i.e. doing everything in dependence upon and under the inspiration of God, conducting such activities as are sent by God with such resources as God places at his disposal. God never lets us see that He Himself does anything. He achieves His aims through men inspired by Him. When help was received from unexpected quarters or from friends without our asking for it, his faith led him to believe that it was sent by God. Similarly when some activity came to them unsought Gandhi thought it was a Godsend. Not to take it up would have been sheer cowardice, laziness or the like.

Similarly Gandhi applied the same principle to coworkers, material resources and to activities. We may have the funds and know how they were to be used, but we can do nothing in the absence of coworkers. They too should come unsought. Gandhi and other Ashramites did not merely imagine but had a living faith that the Ashram was God's If therefore He wished to make the Ashram His instrument as regards any activity, it was for Him to place the requisite men and munitions at the Ashram's disposal. Phoenix Settlement, Tolstoy Farm and Sabarmathi Ashram have all been conducted more or less according to these principles consciously or unconsciously.

4. Sevagram

The last of the Ashram that Gandhi founded was *Sevagram* Ashram. When Gandhi was 67 years, he reached the village called Shegaon, near about 8 km from Wardha on the 30th April,1936, remained here for about five to six days. He called the villagers and sought their permission to settle down here. He had no intention to keep anybody with him except his wife Kasturba. However slowly pressure of work necessitated permission to more colleagues until *Sevagram* Ashram also became a full-fledged institution. Seth Jamnalal Bajaj of Wardha, a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi, made available to the ashram about 300 acres of land in the outskirts of the village when barely1,000 people lived,. The small homes which were built in the ashram for Gandhi and Kasturba, and his followers were similar to the typical village homes. The ashram employed some Harijans in the common kitchen to break the caste barrier. It was in the year 1940 that he renamed the village as '*sevagram*'. In Hindi it meant "A village for service".

With meticulous planning different huts were built. Meera Ben, formerly called Miss Madelene Slade, daughter of an English admiral, who had become the disciple of Gandhi, was already settled in *Sevagram* before Gandhi. She herself built a hut for herself. Gandhiji's hut, now known as Adi Niwas was to be built, not more than Rs.500/, and with material available to serve food to inmates and then used to take his meals. Gandhi lived in one corner of the hut built. When the number of residents in the *Adi Nivas* increased, Gandhiji and Kasturba shifted to live in Meeraben's hut. Meeraben constructed one more hut on the eastern side for herself. However, later on she left this hut also for Gandhiji's office and shifted to a nearby village. These huts are known today as 'Bapu kuti' and 'Bapu's office'.

Kasturba had to live in Bapu Kuti in the midst of so many men. Looking to her difficulty, a new hut was constructed for her. Kasturba lived in this new hut with a few inmates and sometimes with occasional women guests. This hut is known as *'Ba Kuti'*. The roof of this hut is covered with bamboos, mats and country mud-tiles. The walls are neatly plastered with white earth. Meeraben had decorated the walls with folk art symbols like Oum, palm tree, peacock and the Charkha symbolising God, nature, living beings and human activity. The windows and doors are also made of bamboos and decorated with local designs. The village craftsmen prepare the palm tree mats, which are spread on the floor. The bamboo almirah hanging by the wall is a specialty. There is one shelf made of bamboo for keeping articles.

He used to sit on simple palm leaf mats. His office was also nearby. Next to him, his secretary Mahadev Desai or Pyarelal or someone else who would assist him used to sit. The visitors also had to sit on the ground. In Gandhiji's office hut a telephone installed at behest of the then Viceroy of is also displayed. Gandhiji's correspondence went on increasing. Naturally, one Secretariat committee was formed to help him. Mahadev Desai was it's chief. Others were Pyarelalji and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur. More people used to help whenever needed. Replies to all the letters were invariably sent, sometimes in detail and sometimes in very brief, according to the importance and of the time.

Prayer was essential for Gandhi's religious experience. Morning and evening prayers became a part of life in *Sevagram*. The place for community prayer should not be expensive. It should be such that it is freely accessible to all. So Gandhiji created one open space under the sky surrounded by bamboo lining. To keep the place dry and free of mud during the rainy season, it is paved with stones and spread over thick sand. Even today evening prayers are held here daily. After the prayer Gandhiji used to speak his thoughts on the Ashram problems or on some burning problem facing the country, or answer questions.

Another important hut was Parchure Kuti. There was a social worker & Sanskrit Pandit, by name Parchure, but he was somehow afflicted with leprosy disease. In those days people used to shun leprosy patients. Therefore, Parchure was thinking of committing suicide. He came to Gandhiji. Gandhiji himself started nursing and cleaning his wounds. It is in this hut where Gandhiji served the leprosy affected Parchure. Under Gandhiji's instructions Shri Manoharji Diwan devoted his whole life to this cause. He started an institution to serve leprosy patients near Sevagram viz. Dattapur village. Parchure then shifted to Dattapur and lived their till his death.

Then you have Mahadev Kutti: Mahadev Desai was Secretary & very close to Gandhiji. He lived with family near Bapu Kuti in a hut called 'Mahadev Kuti'. Mahadevbhai had good command on English and Gujrati languages. He had a pious character. He died on 15th August,1942 while in prison with Gandhiji at the Agakhan Palace in Pune. His absence was deeply felt by Gandhiji. There was another hut, called 'Kishore Kuti'. Kishorebhai Mashruwala was scholar and studied Gandhian thought. He acted as a Secretary to Gandhiji for sometime. He was suffering from asthma. Therefore, the hut built for him is more comfortable and free from wetness during rainy season.

3.5 ASHRAM LIFE IN THE RULES

Ashram life of Gandhi was governed by Eleven Vows as a basis of the Ashram Life. Gandhi had formulated them already when he started formally the Satyagraha Ashram in Sabarmathi. Afterwards when he was in Yerawda Jail, Pune, he had been sending week after week explanations of each vow, as a sort of weekly exhortation to his ashramites. All those explanations have been compiled into a booklet called *From Yerwda Mandir*. For details you may read that book. But here some of the salient points may be mentioned.

1. Truth (*Satya*)

Ashram owed its very existence to the pursuit and the attempted practice of Truth. Devotion to this Truth was the sole justification for its existence. So Gandhi said to the Asrahamites: All our activities should be centred in Truth. without Truth it is impossible to observe any principles or rules in life. Generally speaking, observation of the law of Truth is understood merely to mean that we must speak the truth. But Gandhi understands the word *Satya* or Truth in a much wider sense. There should be Truth in thought, Truth in speech, and Truth in action. It should be practiced with single-minded devotion *(abhyasa)* and indifference to all other interests in life *(vairagya.)*

Even in spite of such devotion, what appears as truth to one person may often appear as untruth to another person. But that need not worry the seeker. Where there is honest effort, it will be realized that what appear to be different truths are like the countless and apparently different leaves of the same tree. God Himself appears to different individuals in different aspects. Yet He is one. Hence there is nothing wrong in every man following Truth according to his lights. Indeed it is his duty to do so. Even if there is a mistake on the part of any one so following Truth, it will be automatically set right, when there is only *tapas* — self-suffering, and no trace of self-interest, there is no problem. It is this that Gandhi succinctly put in the distinction between Absolute Truth and the Relative Truth.

2. Non-violence (*Ahimsa*)

Ahimsa is not simply abstaining from inflicting injury on others. Not to hurt any living thing is no doubt a part of ahimsa. But it is its least expression. More than that, it implies abstaining from every evil thought, from undue haste, from lying, from hatred, from wishing ill to anybody. Positively it is love for all.

Such a wider meaning of ahimsa flows from the meaning of truth itself. Given the distinction between Absolute Truth, Gandhi now says, it is impossible for us to realize perfect Truth, to see face to face Truth which is eternal so long as we are imprisoned in this mortal frame of this ephemeral body. If we regard even those who do harm to us as our kith and kin, we will make them to realize the kinship, only by voluntarily taking suffering on ourselves for vindicating what we perceive as truth, rather than punishing others for holding a different perception of truth. This is exactly what is called the path of ahimsa. It may entail continuous suffering and the cultivating of endless patience. But if we persevere in this path of self-suffering, the enemy is bound in the end to turn away from his evil ways. Our peace of mind increases in spite of suffering; we become braver and more enterprising; we understand more clearly the difference between what is everlasting and what is not; we learn how to distinguish between what is our duty and what is not. Our pride melts away, and we become humble. Our worldly attachment diminishes, and the evil within us diminishes from day to day.

It is true that it is impossible to have a total non-violence. In the place where we stand there are millions of micro-organisms to whom the place belongs, and who are hurt by our presence there. So what is required is to give up all attachment to our body. Our body does not belong to us. While it lasts, we must use it as a trust handed over to our charge. Treating in this way the things of the flesh, we may one day expect to become free from the burden of the body. Realizing the limitations of the flesh, we must strive day by day towards the ideal with what strength we have in us.

3. Chastity (*Brahmacharya*)

Granted that realization of Truth requires utter selflessness, then self-gratification through marriage is untenable for one who wants to pursue after Truth. Granted that Ahimsa means Universal Love, it is impossible to fulfill the vow if a man gives his love to one woman, or a woman to one man. As a faithful wife must be prepared to sacrifice her all for the sake of her husband, and a faithful husband for the sake of his wife, it is clear that such persons cannot rise to the height of Universal Love, or look upon all humankind as kith and kin. Hence, one who would obey the law of ahimsa cannot marry, not to speak of gratification outside the marital bond.

Then the question may arise cannot people who are already married attain Truth and Nonviolence? Gandhi suggests a way out for them. If they think of each other as brother and sister, they are freed for universal service. Their love becomes free from the impurity of lust and so grows stronger. The thought of all the women in the world as his sisters, mothers or daughters will at once ennoble a man and snap his chains.

Brahmacharya must be observed in thought, word and deed. If one controls his body, but is nursing evil thoughts in his mind, it is not only a vain effort but also harmful to suppress the body. So while the body is subject to our control, we must put forth a constant endeavour to bring the mind under control. Again, Brahmacharya does not mean for Gandhi mere control of animal passion, but control of all the organs of sense. He who attempts to control only one organ, and allows all the others free play, is bound to find his effort futile. To hear suggestive stories with the ears, to see suggestive sights with the eyes, to taste stimulating food with the tongue, to touch exciting things with the hands, and then at the same time to expect to control the only remaining organ is like putting one's hands in the fire, and expecting to escape being burnt. Perhaps the palate is the chief culprit to be controlled. That is why Gandhi made control of the palate as a separate vow. Gandhi reiterates it by the root meaning of brahmacharya. If the whole (charya) 'course of conduct' is to be adapted to 'the search of Brahma', i.e. Truth, then control of all the senses, not merely sexual aspect, is necessary for fulfilling this vow.

4. Control of Palate

Control of the palate is very closely connected with the observance of *brahmacharya*. Gandhi elevated it to the rank of an independent observance in the Satyagraha Ashram though it is not included in the traditional list of Mahavratas. For, he says that he found from experience that the observance of celibacy becomes comparatively easy, if one acquires mastery over the palate. . Food has to be taken as we take medicine. Just as medicine is taken whether it is palatable or not, and in too small a dose. So too food must be taken not for its pleasant taste, neither in large quantities. Even putting salt in one's food, in order to increase the taste or modify its flavor was forbidden for the ashramites. So the ashram gave up many things that people we have been enjoying, as they are not needed for nutrition. One must resolutely avoid that food which gives mere pleasures. The Ashram kitchen cooked only such food as helps us to keep the body a fit instrument for service

Parents, out of false affection, give their children a variety of foods, ruin their constitutions, and create in them artificial tastes. When they grow up, they have diseased bodies and perverted tastes. The evil consequences of this early indulgence dog us at every step; we waste much money and fall an easy prey to the medicine man. The body is injured every time that one over-eats, and the injury can be partially repaired only by fasting.

5. Non-Stealing

Ordinarily we think of theft only as taking things belonging to another without his knowledge and his permission. But Gandhi says that it is theft to take anything belonging to another without his permission, even if it be with his knowledge. It is equally theft to take something from another even with his permission if we have no real need of it. Gandhi’s meaning of stealing goes much further so as to cover it as theft to take even what belongs to ourselves, if not really needed. If a father, for example, eats something secretly, keeping his children in the dark about it, more than necessary, and just for the same of taste, he is according to Gandhi committing the act of stealing.

We are not always aware of our real 'needs, and most of us improperly multiply our wants, and thus unconsciously make thieves of ourselves. If we devote some thought to the subject, we shall find that we can get rid of quite a number of our wants. One who follows the observance of Non-stealing will bring about a progressive reduction of his own wants. Much of the distressing poverty in this world has arisen out of breaches of the principle of Non-stealing.

Apart from the external or physical theft, Gandhi points to another kind of theft subtler and far more degrading to the human spirit. It is theft mentally to desire acquisition of anything belonging to others, or to cast a greedy eye on it, or if one egotistically claims to have originated some good idea, which, really speaking, did not originate with him.

6. Non-possession

Non-possession is allied to Non-stealing. It demands one not to have private property; nor storing things for the future. God never creates more than what is strictly needed for the moment. If therefore we repose faith in His providence, we should rest assured, that He will give us every day our daily bread, meaning everything that we require. The rich having superfluous store of things which they do not need is indeed the cause of the millions starving to death for want of sustenance. If each retained possession only of what he needed, no one would be in want, and all would live in contentment. So the rich should take the initiative in dispossession with a view to a universal diffusion of the spirit of contentment. If only they keep their own property within moderate limits, the starving will easily be fed.

Perfect fulfillment of the ideal of Non-possession requires that man should, like the birds, have no roof over his head, no clothing and no stock of food for the morrow. Gandhi agrees that it is impossible for ordinary seekers to follow it. But we must keep the ideal constantly in view, and in the light thereof, critically examine our possessions, and try to reduce them. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment, and increases the capacity for service. Civilization, in the real sense of the term, consists in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants, not in their multiplication. If we possess things the necessity for which cannot be proved then you tempt our neighbours to thieve.

In the opinion of Gandhi our body too is a possession. So the best way of observing the vow of non-possession is to have a total renunciation of it by using the body for the purposes of service. We eat and drink, sleep and wake, for service alone.

The vow of Non-possession is to be practiced not only with reference to things. But it is applicable to thoughts, as well. So we need not fill our brain with useless knowledge, thoughts which turn us away from God, or do not turn us towards Him.

7. Fearlessness

Gandhi during his long tours throughout India understood that people were seized with a paralyzing fear. Political situation also was a main reason for such a fear. So to remove it from the heart of the people he included Fearlessness also as a vow. It primarily meant freedom from all external fear, fear of disease, bodily injury and death, of dispossession, of losing one's nearest and dearest, of losing reputation or giving offence, and so on. The easiest way to be fearless is to cultivate non-attachment to body. And he set the example of Harishchandra. Just he did, the seeker after Truth should be ready to sacrifice his all in the quest of Truth. Then fearlessness will automatically flow.

Fearlessness means only giving up all external fears. But we must rightly fear the internal foes like the animal passion and anger. Once we have conquered these traitors within the camp, the external fears will automatically vanish. All fears revolve round the body as the centre. So the best way to cultivate fearlessness is to get rid of attachment for the body, and attachment for wealth, for family and for the body. Wealth, family and body will be there, just the same; we have only to change our attitude towards them. All these are not ours, but God's. Nothing whatever in this world is ours. So you may ‘enjoy the things of the earth, but by renouncing them.'

8. Removal of Untouchability

Untouchability, meaning pollution by the touch of certain persons by reason of their birth is an excrescence of Hinduism. It is wrong to treat certain human beings as untouchables from birth. A mother may be 'untouchable' so long as she has not washed her hands after cleaning up her child's mess. But Bhangis, Dhedhs, Chamars are involved in cleaning work and so for that reason they are not to be contemptuously looked down. They must only be taught to bathe after their cleaning work. Hence it is the bounden duty of every Hindu to combat it. Every Hindu, therefore, who considers it a sin, should atone for it by associating with untouchables in a spirit of love and service, deeming himself purified by such acts, redressing their grievances, helping them patiently to overcome ignorance and other evils due to the slavery of ages, and inspiring other Hindus to do likewise.

9. Bread Labour

First by quoting sacred writings like the *Gita* and the Bible, Gandhi brings out the need of sweating to eat. Then he says reason also leads to the same conclusion. A millionaire cannot carry on for long, and will soon get tired of his life, if he rolls in his bed all day long, and is even helped to his food. He therefore induces hunger by exercise, and helps himself to the food he eats. Now, why should not that exercise be in some shape or form of productive. That is precisely Bread labour. No one asks the cultivator to take breathing exercise or to work his muscles. And more than nine tenths of humanity lives by tilling the soil. How much happier, and more peaceful would the world become, if the remaining tenth followed the example of the overwhelming majority at least to the extent of labouring enough for their food!

If such people begin to work, then many hardships, connected with agriculture, would be easily redressed. Again unpleasant distinctions of rank would be abolished. The world-wide conflict between capital and labour will be resolved. The rich would still be there, but they would deem themselves only trustees of their property and would use it mainly in the public interest.

Bread labour need not be related with agriculture alone. Those who are not in a position to take to it, can therefore spin or weave, or take up carpentry or smithery. Every one must be his own scavenger. Evacuation is as necessary as eating; and the best thing would be for every one to dispose of his own waste. Scavenging, thus intelligently taken up, will help one to a true appreciation of the equality of man.

10. **Equality of Religions**

It is an important virtue to be practiced in a multi-religious society, like India. It only means a follower of a religion should be able to respect the other religions as useful to its followers. You will learn more about this vow in the next unit.

11. *Swadeshi*

Swadeshi simply means dedicating oneself to the service of his immediate neighbours. This does not mean disservice to those who are far away, but rather the contrary. 'As with the individual, so with the universe' is an unfailing principle, which we would do well to lay to heart. On the other hand, a man who allows himself to be lured by `the distant scene,' and runs to the ends of the earth for service, is not only foiled in his ambition, but also fails in his duty towards his neighbours. Take a concrete instance. In the particular place where I live, I have certain persons as my neighbours, some relations and dependents. Naturally, they all feel, as they have a right to, that they have a claim on me, and look to me for help and support. Suppose now I leave them all at once, and set out to serve people in a distant place. My decision would throw my little world of neighbours and dependents out of gear, while my gratuitous knight-errantry would, more likely than not, disturb the atmosphere in the new place.

There may be an occasion for a votary of *Swadeshi* to sacrifice his family at the altar of universal service. Such an act of willing immolation will then constitute the highest service rendered to the family. “Whosoever saveth his life shall lose it, and whosoever loseth his life for the Lord's sake shall find it” holds good for the family group no less than for the individual. Take another instance. Supposing there is an out-break of plague in my village, and in trying to serve the victims of the epidemic, I, my wife and children and all the rest of my family are wiped out of existence; then in inducing those dearest and nearest to join me, I will not have acted as the destroyer of my family, but on the contrary as its truest friend. In Swadeshi there is no room for selfishness; or if there is selfishness in it, it is of the highest type, which is not different from the highest altruism. Swadeshi in its purest form is the acme of universal service.

It was by following this line of argument, that Gandhi hit upon *Khadi* as the necessary application to Indian society. the teeming millions of India and the crores of our semi-starved countrymen can live by the universalizing of *Khadi* or the spinning-wheel alone. Let no one suppose, that the practice of *Swadeshi* through *Khadi* would harm the foreign or Indian mill-owners. Wearing *Khadi* is the first indispensable step. One should not stop with wearing *Khadi*. One must carefully study one’s environment, and try to help his neighbours wherever possible, by giving preference to local manufactures, even if they are of an inferior grade or dearer in price than things manufactured elsewhere without of course nurturing hatred to Multi National Corporations.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

1) Explain the meaning of Ashram and how does its contribute to religious life? ………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

2) Mention the major ashrams founded by Gandhi?

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………….

3) State the most basic of Gandhi's vows ?

……………………………………………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

4) Specify the most important vow for the Indian society to bring about a classless society?

……………………………………………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

Conclusion

From the foregoing it is clear Gandhi had a deep religious consciousness with far reaching consequences on one's transformation and transformation of society and of environment. It is high time that we realized the importance of Gandhi's religious experience and made it our own. The ashram life may be too big an ideal for us.

But if we can set that as an ideal and try our best to go nearer and nearer to it, we may be able to find an alternative to the malaise of today's civilization. The people who are in the mad rush today, increasing their wants senselessly suppose that they are enhancing their importance and real knowledge. A day will come when they will exclaim, "What have we been doing?" Also the many civilizations have risen one after another, flourished, declined and disappeared and in spite of their big boast of human progress If the moral height of humankind hasn't increased even an inch, then we cannot but exclaim: To what end all this? What's the purpose? This is the basic question Jesus, Buddha, Prophet Mohammed raised and gave answers each in his own way. In our times, Gandhi has asked the same question and tried to put his answer in the form of ashram life. Shall we at least set our eyes on that ideal and desire to strive after it in our own limited way?

3.6 LET US SUM UP

I.1.Gandhi was deeply a religious person. His religious experience did not consist in a single and specific experience that occurred at one moment of life but in a life-long experience that permeated into all aspects of life. He had a scientific bent of mind to experiment everything that came on his way. He made a personal synthesis of all that he had learnt from his rich contact with many religions and applied to all aspects of life.

2. The many factors of his early life that had prepared him for the personal synthesis were his family background, which was filled with religious atmosphere of his own native religion. The traditional stories had a profound impact on him. Some painful experiences also led him to make a sincere confession to his father, with the promise never to commit a sin again. Beside, the

multi-religious atmosphere at home trained the boy to develop a sense of toleration to other religions. Moreover, his close contacts with Christians in London and in South Africa and his work with Muslims made him know and appreciate those faiths. Moreover his deeper study of various religions, he undertook to resolve the issue of his own conversion, made him arrive at certain conclusion about what religions means and what religious plurality is.

3. Gandhi defines religion as that which changes one's very nature, which binds one indissolubly to the truth within and become perfect. It enables one to strive after Truth, minimum to follow morality, but really to go through a self-purification process in thought, word and action. Religious plurality arises out of human necessity, on account of the differences in temperamental factors, genetic and other subjective factors of the person of the Attainment. Again, the attained person could grasps the Truth and explains it to his followers, only in the language he knows, using the cultural moulds and according to the climatic conditions of the place and historical contexts of the peoples. Further, commentators while interpreting the Truth, would have added their own accretions to the original truth. Thus every religion is imperfect while being true as well.

4. The core of religion is basically morality, while at the same time it binds, holds, and sustains people in hours of trial. When morality incarnates itself in a living person it becomes religion. On account of his Attainment others follow him, striving after the same ideal, practicing what he practiced (cult), explaining his ideal as well as his practices (creed), and stabilizing the pursuit by a set of laws of living (code), this becomes religion. Religion is to morality what water is to the seed that is sown in the soil. True religion and true morality are bound up with each other. Gandhi would even say that religion and morality are identical.

II..1. Ashram in the Hindu tradition means a house where a true Guru is living and teaching God-seekers seeking spiritual advice and help. It is a simple community-living, oriented to spiritual discipline and God-realization. But Gandhi's Ashram meant a residential work centre for those who have dedicated themselves for an integral life of satyagraha, and were totally committed to the principles of non-violence as a creed**.** They contribute to the richness of religious experience through practice of vows, unflinchingly.

2. The Pheonix Settlement, The Tolstoy Farm, Satyagraha Ashram, and Sevagram are the four Ashrams founded by Gandhi at the four important phases of his public life.

3. Observance of Truth is the most basic vows of Gandhi's ashram. It was the sole justification for its existence. Without Truth it is impossible to observe any principles or rules in life. As against the general understanding Gandhi meant by truth not simply that we must speak the truth, but to follow Truth in thought, Truth in speech, and Truth in action.

Gandhi distinguishes between Absolute Truth (God, in Himself) and Relative Truth (God appearing to different individuals in different aspects). There is nothing wrong in everyone following Truth according to one's lights. Indeed it is his duty to do so. So even if there is a mistake on the part of any one so following Truth, it will be automatically set right, when there is only tapas — self-suffering, and no trace of self-interest, there is no problem.

4. Untouchability, meaning pollution by the touch of certain persons from birth, is according to Gandhi, an 'excrescence of Hinduism' and a 'blot on Hinduism'. Just because Bhangis, Dhedhs, Chamars are involved in cleaning work they cannot be treated as untouchables. A mother may be 'untouchable' so long as she has not washed her hands after cleaning up her child's mess. So also they must be taught to bathe after their cleaning work. Hence it is the bounden duty of every Hindu to combat it, and should even atone for the sin. So he considered Removal of Untouchability as the vow, most necessary for Indian society.

3.7 KEY WORDS

"Shravana Pitribhakti, Harichandra Story, confession of his sins , Anekantavada, Rai Chandbai, Essence of Religion, Plurality of religions, 'Lead Kindly Light' Supreme exemplar of Satyagraha, 'the kingdom of God' Sanatani Hindu, Daridranarayana, ashram, Unto This Last, Tolstoy Farm, Sabarmathi Ashram, Sevagram, Adi Nivas, Meera ben, Parchure Kuti, From Yerwda Mandir, Abhyasa, Vairagya, Tapas, Brahmacharya

3.8 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

M.K. Gandhi. *An Autobiogaraphy Or The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1927.

M.K. Gandhi. *From Yeravda Mandir.* Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1955.

M.K. Gandhi. *Ashram Observances in Action.* Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1955.

M.K. Gandhi. *In Search of the Supreme*. Vol. II. Ed. V.B. Kher. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1961.

J. Thekkinedath. *Love of neighbor in Mahatma Gandhi*, Alwaye: Pontifical Institute of Theology and Philosophy, 1973.

J.B. Kripalani. *Gandhi His Life and Thought.* New Delhi: Publication Division, Govt. of India, 1970, Revised 1991.

K.L.Seshagiri Rao. *Mahatma Gandhi and C.F. Andres: A Study in Hindu Christian Dialogue*. Patiala: Punjabi University, 1969.

UNIT 4 RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AND RELIGIOUS HARMONY

Contents

4.0 Objectives
4.1 Introduction
4.2 Religions in India
4.3 Religious Tolerance in India: A Historical Overview
4.4 Religious Harmony
4.5 Let Us Sum Up
4.6 Key Words
4.7 Further Readings and References

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

4.0 OBJECTIVES

Tolerance is willingness to accept or allow a thing which one may not agree with, or even disapproves of. It is ability to suffer or endure something without being harmed. As distinguished from 'toleration', the act of putting up with something that one may not agree with or disapproves of, 'tolerance' is an attitude of mind to bear or permit something which one does not approve of. This attitude is applicable only to the one who is in a position of disallowing it, but still refrains from doing it.

Religious tolerance is no more than the willingness of the adherents of a dominant religion to accept or allow other religions to exist, although they disagree with those religious beliefs and practices, look upon them with disapproval as inferior, mistaken or harmful. In the case of individuals, religious tolerance generally means bearing with other people's religious practices, although one may not approve of it. It does not imply that one need to believe that other religions are equally true. It only means that one puts up with the fact that others have the right to hold their beliefs and practice in the way they do. Within a nation or ethnic group, it is acceptance of the right for others to hold beliefs that differ from the dominant religion, worship freely according to these beliefs and even attempt to peacefully convince others to convert to that faith.

However, real religious harmony will be brought about in a nation only when people realize that 'Truth is One but the Paths are Many,' that the goal of all religions is essentially the same despite their differences in worship-forms, belief-systems, and lifestyles. Further, the people must realize that we can foster an attitude of open dialogue and mutual exchange of ideas, practices and patterns of lifestyles, rather than imposing one's beliefs on others by force.

Of these two kinds of attitudes, namely religious tolerance and religious harmony, it is harmony between faiths that Gandhi wanted to establish in India rather than simply religious tolerance. In this unit then you are expected to learn

- To have broad Sketch of the Religions in India
- To overview the religious tolerance of Indian religions
- To validate the grounds for religious harmony

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Indian history as well as its social fabric is indeed unique in the world. This is only land, perhaps in the whole of world, whose history goes back to thousands of years before the Christ and yet has survived the onslaughts of time. While many of its contemporary civilizations like the Assyrian, Babylonian and Roman have died out in, the Indian culture has managed not only to survive the ravages of time but also to flourish. Another point of its uniqueness is the multi religious and multicultural ethos which has not only been tolerated but also maintained with a constitutional safeguarded.

Religion plays a major role in the Indian way of life. A wide variety of Indian religious customs and rituals are not only just performed in the country but also they constitute organization of the social life of the people in the country. Moreover, religion helps people to transmit their values from one generation to another, and influences the way they interact with the natural environment. It gives purpose and meaning to life, giving thereby the people of India a scope to prosper together. It is a matter of great importance to understand how despite the variety of religions, they are able to be active and vibrant in the day to day life of its adherents, forming the warp and woof the ordinary life of the people, and organizing their life peacefully and in harmony. It is significant to know that the national life of the Indian nation, even after the Partition, did not choose the religion of the majority as the national religion. It is not merely tolerance of religions but harmony between faiths that is visualized in the Constitution of India. And that vision, except for a few communal frenzy cropping up now and then, has been kept up by and large unimpaired till date.

The one who is greatly responsible for creating that vision of religious harmony is certainly Gandhi. Here it must be noted that Gandhi was not motivated by political expediency. But it was as a matter of policy, and a voluntary choice that Gandhi worked for establishing in India religious harmony rather than merely religious tolerance. It is that specific contribution by Gandhi that forms subject of inquiry in this Unit.

To understand and appreciate Gandhi's blueprint for such a religious harmony, it may be necessary for you first to have at least broad sketch of the variety of religions that exist in India. Next, it will be useful to have at least a historical overview of the interactions with one another during their long history of nearly five thousand years. In the light of these background-materials, then, you will be in a position to gauge the grounds Gandhi gives for validating the religious harmony, not merely religious tolerance.

4.2 RELIGIONS IN INDIA

There is probably no other land in the world which has more diversity of religious and sects than in India. Apart from having sheltered all the sematic religions, India was also the birthplace of four great religions (Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism) and has been an important home to one of oldest religions of the world (Zoroastrianism). Its unique merit lies not merely in accommodating these religions in its social fabric, but also in assimilating and absorbing many of the features and waving them all into a synthetic culture.

Hinduism is the most predominant of religion of India. It is not a single religion founded by one specific prophet or sage nor is it based upon a single book. It is actually a family of religions and cultures within whose umbrella numerous sects of religions began to flourish and are still flourishing with some common traits binding them into a cluster. The most common of such traits are

- belief in a single supreme Godhead that is present in everything,
- belief in other gods who are aspects of that supreme God,
- belief that the soul repeatedly goes through a cycle of rebirths,
- belief in Karma, a force that determines the quality of each birth, depending on how well one behaved in a past life.

Most of the Hindus worship at home and have a shrine there or a sacred corner in a small house. Though Hindu temples are the focus of religious life, yet there is not a strong tradition of congregational worship. Traditionally Hinduism was not known for seeking to convert people, although some modern Hindu sects now do seek converts.

Jainism was very ancient religion of India. It claims a lineage of 24 enlightened beings *(Thirthankaras).* Only the last two of them could be historically traced: Parsva (9th century BCE) and Mahavira (6th century BCE). Of these two, it is Mahavira about whom more reliable data are available and hence is said to be the founder of the religion as it is known today. Like Buddhism, Jainism also arose in opposition to the sacrificial Vedic religion, and the Brahmin domination. It does not advocate belief in God or gods to whom we need to pray. It does not accept role of priestly class in society. It empowers its followers to be spiritually self-reliant. Its key idea is ‘everyone is maker of one’s own destiny’ and to be ‘conqueror of self’. The word "Jaina" is derived from the root word ji meaning to conquer.

Jainism, along with Buddhism, spread throughout India during the period of the Magadha Empire. Jainism has declined since the 12th century in many regions, but continues to be an influential religion in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka. Though a miniscule minority who practice this faith, it remains a powerfully influential religion even today. Jainism is the most tolerant of religions. Its unique theory of *Anekantavada* emphasizing the many-sided-ness of reality, is very conducive to tolerance of different points of views. Thus all prejudices are allowed to subside and attitude of accommodation is promoted even with people of conflicting points of views. This necessarily leads to pursuit of non-violence.

Buddhism is religio-philosophical tradition, founded by Gautama Buddha in the year around 500 before Christ. Buddha, before enlightenment was a prince called Siddharta. 'Buddha' means 'one who has woken up' and the one who awakens others to the knowledge of the world as it truly is. The misery or suffering is universally felt by the people because they live asleep, never knowing or seeing life as it really is. Once they are awakened to the real cause of suffering in one’s desire or attachment, and walk in the eight fold path, they are sure to find release from suffering.

Buddhism is known for its concrete techniques of the release, non-dogmatic and rational approach, not concerned so much about the metaphysical realities like God or soul, but emphasizing the present and giving opportunity for personal transformation. Still more is appealing is its teaching of universal compassion for the suffering of beings and for the benefit and welfare of all beings.

Buddhism does not actively look for converts, but it is thoroughly welcoming to those who do want to convert. Buddhism can coexist with other faiths.

Sikhism

Sikhism is the youngest of the world's four great monotheistic religions. It began as a relatively neutral faith system that proposed to include the best practices of Hinduism and Islam. The formation of its specific character owes to Guru Nanak in the Punjab state in Northwest India, in the 15th Century and nine other Gurus who succeeded him, one after another. The word "Sikh" in Punjabi means "disciple". Sikhs are disciples of the Gurus. Guru Nanak, the first Guru, started the new tradition, though his devotion to almighty God. The last of the 10 Gurus, Guru Gobind Singh gave the final shape to the tradition, by instituting the khalsa, extolling the heroism of five men of excellent moral qualities, spiritual fervor and baptizing them and conferring guruship them as a community, along with the holy Guru Granth. Since then the Khalsa implies the collective, spiritually-directed will of the community guided by the Guru Granth Sahib.

He is to lead his life according to the Guru's teaching and is to respect but not practise or participate in non-Sikh religious rites or ceremonies, especially abandoning the caste system. All Sikhs were taught to treat all in the community as equals; no distinction was to be made between the different professions or station in life. Sikh men are particularly easy to identify because the Five Ks:1.*Kesh* (full beard and uncut hair) 2.*Kanga* (a small comb) 3. *Kaccha* – warrior short trousers, denoting chastity. 4.*Kara (* steel bangle as a sign of restraint and bondage to the Guru).5.*Kirpan* (a sword as a symbol of dignity, power and courage).

The Sikhs attend a religious service once a week at a Gurdwara (temple) place of worship. Sikhism does not have priests, but most gurdwaras will have a Granthi, or a learned man who is skilled in reading the scriptures. The Adi Granth, the Sikh scripture is considered to be the present day embodiment of the Sikh Guru, and so is called the Guru Granth Sahib is treated with the same respect and devotion as would have been given to a human Guru. Sikhism does not actively look for converts, but it welcomes those who want to get converted to it.

Judaism

There had been different Jewish communities arriving in India at different times. The Bene Israel community which lived in the villages of west Maharashtra and Cochin Jews of Kerela were the first to arrive in India probably shortly after the fall of Jerusalem in the eighth century BCE. Then Bne Menashe Jews who settled themselves in East India, in Calcutta seem to have arrived from China and Myanmar (Burma). The 'Baghdadi Jews' was a collective name given to those Jews who had come from Arab countries and Iran in the late 18th century, and those who came from Iraq and Syria in the 19th century because of persecution over there. They had enriched the Indian culture with their own traits. The Synagogue of Cochini Jews is there to see in Mattenchery in Kerala even today.

Zoroasterianism

The descendants of the disciples of an Iranian Prophet Zoroaster (1400 BCE) left Iran and sought a new land of religious freedom and settled in North West India around the tenth century during the Muslim persecution. And they were known as Parsis (Persians). Their main centre in India today is Mumbai . The Parsis believe in a good God Ahura Mazda, who is opposed to and will ultimately defeat evil, Angra Mainyu. . They are fire worshipers. The essential feature of their religion is physical and moral purity. They are known as have been commercially the most enterprising people and the most highly educated, industrious and prosperous They are known for their accommodative and peace loving nature.

Islam

Islam has been present in South India and Sind, through the settlement of Muslim Arab traders, much before the invasions that came from other Muslim countries via the more warlike north-western routes, Even with regard to the Northern Islam, it is wrong to think that it has always indulged in forced conversions. As regards the many conversions that took place through force also, Islam never interfered with India's multi-religious spectrum. Even when the Muslim rule was reigning supreme in the major portion of the Subcontinent for nearly six centuries, the local communities of various religions were not interfered. They all were allowed to retain their identity as it is evident from the survival of the different calendars that are respectively associated with Buddhism, Jainism, Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism as well as Islam.

From around the fourteenth century there arose an altogether new trend, thanks to Hindu Bhakti and Muslim Sufi traditions. The theme of interreligious tolerance was a persistent theme in the poetry of Kabir, Dadu, Raidasa, Sena, Mira Bai and others, a circle of preacher-poets in whose name many sects were founded later all in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

With Akbar the Great the spirit of interreligious harmony got royal sponsorship from the state. In the late sixteenth century he arranged for meetings between adherents of different faiths, including Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsees, Jains, Jews and even atheists. Thereby Akbar made interreligious dialogue a respectable thing, central to participatory governance. He even made it a rule that 'the pursuit of reason' rather than 'reliance on faith-tradition' would be followed as the criterion to address difficult problems of social harmony. His pluralist commitment is clear from the fact that he filled his court with non-Muslim intellectuals and artists. Not only did Akbar personally championed the pluralist ideals of religions, but he also made state-tolerance of religious differences a top priority of his reign. He implemented the policy of religious neutrality that ‘no one would be legally interfered with on account of religion’. Further by enunciating that ‘anyone would be free to go over to a religion that pleases him’

Now, the Muslim population is about 9%, the second largest population. Though there may be a fundamentalist trends among a few Muslims as in any other religion and there is no reason why their patriotism must be suspected. Even when the option was there to move and have their living to Pakistan, the Indian Muslims have made an option to be in India secularist nation. And this itself is to be taken as a proof of their patriotism and their readiness to accommodate with pluralist ethos of India

Christianity

Christian faith is said to have come to India already by the fourth century. But in the 16th century a huge number of Christian settlements was created by the Portuguese rule in Goa. The British, in the beginning their rule, were opposed to the missionaries’ entry to India. However after a prolonged debate for years in the English Parliament, a missionary clause was passed in the Charter Act of 1813, after which India witnessed an influx of missionaries. In the name of reform they encouraged conversion from local religion to Christianity. Thus in 19th century many mass conversion movements took place. Even then the growth of Christianity has been minimal amounting to 2.3 % of Indian population now.

However the Christian influence on the overall reform of India as well as on nation building is uncontestable specially in fields of education, health services, and selfless and self-sacrificing service to the poor. Even today 90% of the beneficiaries in almost every educational institution are from other communities. Similarly it was the Missionaries' social works that actually set the developmental trend first in Indian society.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1). Distinguish between 'religious tolerance' and 'religious harmony'

…………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………….

2). What is the uniqueness of India in respect of religions? Indicate the contribution Gandhi made in the contemporary times.

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………….

3). Mention a few common traits of the ancient Indian religions

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………….

4.) State the contributions of those religions that were born elsewhere to the social fabric of India?

…………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………….

4.3 RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN INDIA: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

In the case of India religious tolerance was almost an essential part of the cultural history in the vast Subcontinent. Most historians accept that the Indo Aryans who had gradually settled themselves in the North-West of the Subcontinent during a span of nearly a millennium (between 1500 BC and 800 BC) developed a common cultural life with local variations of which the most advanced was based upon the teachings of Vedas. The Vedic culture which was simple and nature-bound began to grow into a complex structure of elaborate religious rites, philosophical faith, and intricate legal and social systems. It was dynamic enough to spread towards the East and to bring even the South under its sphere of influence.

The Vedic culture would have made a sway of the whole subcontinent, but for certain factors. The over-emphasis on the rites and ascetic practices by the Brhamans was too impractical. The philosophical approach of the Upanishads was too abstract to appeal to ordinary people, and its social structure was too rigorous and un-equal to be accepted by all the people with an equal appeal. The rise of Buddhism and Jainism that struck at the roots of the caste system, moderated the rigour of asceticism, ritualism proved to be more of a reaction to traditional Hindu culture became a corrective to Hindu excessiveness.

Perhaps thanks to their influence there arose a reconstructed Hinduism with the Bhagawad Gita as its spiritual and moral basis and the two Epics as the emotional and the Puranas as its imaginative, and the Dhrma Shastras of Manu as the legal bases and the six systems as the abstract and philosophic bases. The multi-pronged emphasis of the reconstructed Hinduism, with its demands for the minimum of common religious belief and practice, allowing complete cultural autonomy to the different local people in such things as dress, food, language, and mores and manners, could easily make a countrywide appeal to all sorts of people, races and language.

The Islamic contacts that started in the 8th century A.D. through mainly trade were smooth with the South India and Sind. However the intrusion of Muslim rulers in the North West, towards the end of 9th century, posed politically many a hostile challenge between 1206 and 1526. However, at the secular level there resulted a synthetic Indian cultural renaissance, creating "Indo-Muslim" fusion of cultures, through lasting syncretic monuments in architecture, music, literature and clothing. It is surmised that the Urdu language (literally meaning "horde" or mass in various Turkic dialects) was born during this period as a result of the intermingling of the local speakers of Sanskritic Prakrits with immigrants speaking Persian, Turkic and Arabic under the Muslim rulers. At the religious level, though there arose religious tolerance, mainly on account of the preaching of Hindu Bhakti movement as well as the Muslim Sufism. The political policy of the early Moghul Emperors, especially that of Akbar the Great was conducive to the emergence of religious tolerance. However the cultural fusion was limited to the urban centres, and did not penetrate into villages where the Indian populace had concentrated.

With the advent of the Europeans in general, and the British in particular, the modern western culture became a formidable challenge to the Indian culture(s). With their assumed superiority of their culture, they downgraded the ‘natives’ as racially, intellectually and culturally and religiously inferior to themselves. As a reaction to this onslaught of modern civilization, there arose several reformers from both Hindus and Muslims. The Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj, and the Servants of Indian Society among the Hindus.

Among the Indian Muslims, there arose some great men who realized the need of Muslims acquiring education and scientific temper of modernity. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) pioneered modern education for the Muslim community in India by opening the Aligarh a school, which later became the Muhammedan Anglo-Oriental College, still later developed into the Aligarh Muslim University. The British rulers found it an opportunity to woo the Muslim elite and to stem the tide of the Indian National Congress. This institution played, much against

the founder’s views, a crucial role in the Partition of India. However, after the Partition, this university is known for its secular and scientific learning.
Likewise the reforms wrought by Badruddin Tyabji (Tyab Ali) the third President of the Indian National Congress, was the first to create a secular political consciousness. This he did without abating a jot of his zeal' for the advancement of the backward Muslims; and it was most remarkable that he succeeded in obtaining widespread non-Muslim co-operation for it. Badruddin's all-pervasive intellectual and personal distinction enabled him to exert considerable influence for worthy causes on the more enlightened Englishmen, without loss of personal or national dignity. He was not only, as Mahatma Gandhi wrote, "a decisive factor in the deliberations of the Congress". It is through his influence that the Muslim participation in the freedom movement became large and nationally he was a pioneer in making it the Indian ideal, counteracting the Two-Nation theory.

The main aim of all these reformers was reformation of religious and social life of the natives, either falling back on the glorious past, and thereby affirming the superiority of the Indian ancient culture, or by injecting modern ideas into the mind of the people and reinterpreting the past in the light of the modern ideas. In this process their approach consisted in making a distinction between the religious and the secular on the one hand, and on the other hand they accused the religion of the rulers as equally in need of reform and even going to the extent of treating them as untouchables, so that there is nothing to learn from those religions, while however they were ready to take on the modern ideas and incorporate them into to the socio, economic fabric of Indian culture, and political fields. There were some other sections of extremist approach who hated the English rulers both in their political and religious and were keen on liberating themselves from their bondage through violence and arson.

However it was to the credit of Gandhi to have worked for a basic unity in the diversity of cultural life as the foundation for a common nationhood. As opposed to all these different approaches that Gandhi tried to reconstruct the cultural life of India. At the political level Gandhi brought about a synthesis between the elitists’ Congress and the teeming millions, by changing into it into a mass based organization. More importantly at the religio-cultural level Gandhi brought about a wonderful synthesis between the liberal modernists like Rammohun Roy, Mahadev Govind Ranade, and Gopala Krishna Gokhale and the Hindu extremist like Lokmanya Tilak and steered a mid-path. This contribution that Gandhi made at the religio-cultural level was very significant.

What Gandhi envisaged was a common culture as the basis of Indian nationhood in which people of all religions will be not only not in conflict with one another but also each religion will be respecting one another, and will be working for the common task of enriching humanity. The principal feature of the Indian nationhood will be secular in character, not in the western sense of putting aside the religious influences from the state, but imbuing politics with a spirit of deep religiousness, expressing itself in equal respect for each one of the religions, that are present in India. No one religion will be accepted as the official, state religion but all religions would be allowed to flourish freely in their own respective spheres. It implies that it is no more tolerance of religious but religious harmony that was aimed at by Gandhi.

To bring about religious harmony in India, Gandhi thought, the first and foremost requirement was Hindu-Muslim unity. That is why, in his Charter of Reforms (*Constructive Programmes)* he listed Communal Unity as the most basic one. It was indeed a crucial question how to find the common ground on which the two largest communities in the country, the Hindus and the Muslims, can meet in order to live fraternally together and work for the common good of the country which is identical with their common good. Once the Hindu Muslim unity was established, unity with all other communities could be further strengthened. Gandhi never found any serious differences between the Hindus and the other minority communities like the Christians, the Sikhs and the Parsis. That is why Gandhi turned to the question of Hindu-Muslim unity. Hindu –Muslim unity means not unity only between Hindus and Muslims but between all those who call India their homes no matter to what faith they belong.

Already in his South African stay he had realized that the two communities had strong prejudices against each other and there were hardly any relations between them. However, he realized that it was providential that he went to South Africa under a contract to work with Muslim friends of his brother. "I really served Hindus through Muslims whose employee I was. Hindu Muslim unity was part of my very being". On his return to India, when Gandhi involved himself Hindu-Muslim unity, he found it more difficult than in South Africa, because the prejudices between the two communities here had aggravated into a feeling of hostility.

Even then he was fully involved in the issue not as a political expedient to win the freedom for India but a spiritual exercise for the realization of the supreme end of Truth through the unfailing means of Ahimsa. The problem of Hindu-Muslim unity in India was a challenge to his faith in Ahimsa ideal. He openly said: "It would be on the question of Hindu-Muslim unity that my Ahimsa would be put to the severest test". Thus it is clear that Gandhi's earnest desire and ceaseless effort for Hindu-Muslim unity did not originally spring from a political motive but religious one. If it was merely political, he would have been quite content to bring about a patched-up truce, an *ad hoc* alliance between the two communities directed against the common enemy's rule. But what Gandhi was aiming was nothing less than true and lasting friendship, a union of hearts. "It cannot be based upon mutual fear. It must be a partnership between equals each respecting the religion of others."

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Delineate the accommodating nature of the ancient Indo Aryan culture and Examine the major obstacles for universal acceptance. …………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………….

2) Was not Muslim rule suppressive of the local culture?

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………….

3) What was the specific approach of earlier reformers Modern Indian

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………

4). In what way Gandhi proved different from other Modern Indian reformers

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………

5). Why was Hindu-Muslim Unity was the most important for establishing religious harmony in India?

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………

4.4 RELIGIOUS HARMONY

Gandhi's basic conviction about the nature of the religion is that every religion constituted a revelation of truth, in as much as it is supplying a felt-need in the spiritual progress of humanity. Each of them embodies a common motivating force, namely the desire to uplift the human life and give it purpose. This is illustrated the fact of saints in each religions, persons of Attainment, Realization and Perfection. He compared the basic unity of the different religions as the vital sap of the tree which maintains the different branches and the leaves.

At the same time Gandhi emphasized the diversity of religions, too. There is only one God, therefore in theory, there should be only one religion. However when God is revealed to human beings it would become necessarily many and different. Depending upon the different temperaments of human beings and climatic conditions, God will always be differently perceived. Again as the one unalloyed Truth, beyond all speech, passes through human medium, becomes conditioned, limited, and imperfect for no other reason than the human instrumentality involved in receiving and expressing Truth. What was grasped and expressed by the humans that are already imperfect, are interpreted by other humans who are equally imperfect. Thus no one can claim that one's own expression or interpretation of the ultimate truth is the right one. Everybody is right from one's own stand point. But it is impossible that everybody is wrong. In other words, "all religions are true, and equally imperfect too. They are more or less true." Perfection is the exclusive attribute of God and whatever passes through the human touch becomes imperfect. That all religions have the Truth is proved by the fact of saints, the exemplars of Attainment and Perfection. That the religions are imperfect is proved by the fact of many accretions and the superstitions that have grown in each religion.

This basic position of Gandhi regarding the nature of religion and religions has many far reaching consequences. They may be listed out in the form of following principles. They will explain the Gandhi's vision of Religious Harmony.

1. Tolerance

Granted that every religion has the Truth, no religion can claim superiority over any other. The one Truth is always seen in fragments, and different angles of vision. Therefore each one has to show an attitude of toleration of the view point of others, although one may not always understand other's view point. Even among the most conscientious people, there will be enough room for honest differences of opinion in matters of religion, precisely because they are concerned with the Ultimate Concern. The minimum of the expected rule of conduct in any civilized society is mutual tolerance.

Here, tolerance does not mean indifference towards one's own faith, but it gives us a spiritual insight which is far from fanaticism. Knowing the true nature of religion and religions, one breaks down the barriers between faith and faith. By cultivating tolerance for other faiths, one may get a truer understanding of one's own faith. Certainly tolerance does not mean tolerating evil, false or wrong faiths. In the context of the principal faiths of the world, it only means accepting common fundamentals found in all religions.

2. Respect for Other Faiths:

Tolerance may imply a gratuitous assumption of the superiority of one's own position and the inferiority of the others'. On the contrary, if one accepted that each faith has the glimpse of the Truth, in its own way, supplying the felt need of the humanity, just in the same way as my religion has supplied the same to me, then I should be able to respect it even though it is not mine. It means, acceptance of the basic unity among religions, as outlined by Gandhi, namely that the sum total of a faith with its particular frame work of cult, creed and code is as good and helpful to its followers as the sum total of another faith to its own followers to attain perfection within its own frame work. It is not a stance of compromise in a multi religious society, but it is a fundamental verifiable truth about religions, through the great saints produced by all the principal faiths.

This is further reiterated by Gandhi through his own experience. When he read the sacred books of different faiths for his own satisfaction, with an attitude of equimindedness towards them all, he said he became sufficiently familiar with Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Hinduism. In reading these texts, he had the slightest desire to criticize any of those religions merely because they were not my own, but read each sacred book in a spirit of reverence, and found the same fundamental morality in each.

The acceptance of the doctrine of Equality of Religions does not abolish the distinction between religion and irreligion. We do not propose to cultivate toleration for irreligion. That being so, some people might object, that there would be no room left for equimindedness, if everyone took his own decision as to what was religion and what was irreligion. If we follow the law of Love, we shall not bear any hatred towards the irreligious brother. On the contrary, we shall love him, and therefore either we shall bring him to see the error of his ways, or he will point out our error, or each will tolerate the other's difference of opinion. If the other party does not observe the law of love, he may be violent to us. If however we cherish real love for him, it will overcome his bitterness in the end. All obstacles in our path will vanish, if only we observe the golden rule, that we must not be impatient with those whom we may consider to be in error, but must be prepared, if need be, to suffer in our own person

3. Equimindedness:

If one accepts that the attitude of respect, far beyond tolerance, it becomes a necessary requirement for true followers of religions to show equal respect and reverence for the followers of other religions also. "We must have innate respect for other religions as we have for our own. Mind you not mutual toleration, but equal respect." It is this attitude Gandhi, expresses it as equimindedness to all religions. “I believe in *sarva dharma sama bava*.” Gandhi does agree that there would be some things one does not understand. But he it is a mistake hastily to imagine, that anything that we cannot understand is necessarily wrong. Falling back upon his own experience, Gandhi says: “Some things which I did not understand first have since become as clear as daylight. Equimindedness helps us to solve many difficulties and even when we criticize anything, we express ourselves with a humility and a courtesy, which leave no sting behind them

4. Diversity Not Overlooked:

Just because Gandhi emphasized the unity of religions, as a consequence of which the respect of religions and attitude of equimindedness, it does not mean that he ignored the actual diversity of religions. To have equal regard for religions did not mean for Gandhi to adopt other’s view as one’s own. It only means one tries to understand other’s view point, the light in which others look upon the religion. Further it means that we should not emphasis too much on the points of differences so as to instigate hatred among one another but it only means that we should emphasis the points of agreement rather than the diversity. But in no way Gandhi deluded the differences of religions. Here he was quite different from the common attitude of the Hindu populous that all religions are rivers going to the oceans. The popular way of understanding these statements may lead to the indifferentism of religions, in the sense that everything is considered as one and the same. As against such a popular view, Gandhi, while emphasizing the unity of religions, would equally emphasis the unique points of each religion. Therefore for him the diversity of religions are to be equally taken note of.

5. Defects of Religions Not Ignored :

While Gandhi acknowledges the presence of truth in every great religion, he is equally conscious of the numerous defects and degradations of all religions. When he expects people to cultivate the attitude of respect for other religions, he does not imply that we should be blind to the faults of other religions. He only expects the followers of each religion to be alive to the defects of their own faith and make an attempt to overcome those defects first and foremost, at the instance of their encounter with other religions. “Seeing that it takes all my resources in trying to bring my practice to the level of my faith and in preaching the same to my co-religion is, I do not dream of preaching to the followers of other faiths.” Gandhi finds the maxim involved in such a conduct: judge not least you be judged.

6. Irreligion not to be condoned

The acceptance of the doctrine of Equality of Religions does not abolish the distinction between religion and irreligion. We do not propose to cultivate toleration for irreligion. If so, it may be asked, where would be any room left for equimindedness, if everyone took his own decision as to what was religion and what was irreligion? To such an objection Gandhi says: “If we follow the law of Love, we shall not bear any hatred towards the irreligious brother. On the contrary, we shall love him, and therefore either we shall bring him to see the error of his ways, or he will point out our error, or each will tolerate the other's difference of opinion. If the other party does not observe the law of love, he may be violent to us. If however we cherish real love for him, it will overcome his bitterness in the end. All obstacles in our path will vanish, if only we observe the golden rule, that we must not be impatient with those whom we may consider to be in error, but must be prepared, if need be, to suffer in our own person

7. Every Religion to Grow:

Granted that every religion is bound to be imperfect, it follows that every religion is always subjected to a process of growth. Since the truth or God, conceived by us, is bound to be imperfect and pluralistic, there is always a need to re-interpret, re-new and re-juvenate. In this respect, then every religion is bound to constantly grow from imperfection to perfection from less perfection to greater perfection, from untruth to truth and from periphery to the center. In this aspect also Gandhi's affirmation of equality of religions is different from the popular understanding of equality of religions expressed in such statements as 'all religions are paths to God or all are rivers flowing to the ocean.'

8. Learning from one another:

Gandhi, while emphasizing the need of every religion to grow from imperfection to perfection, he also suggested some means for such a growth. One of the principal suggestions is that when a religion encounters other religions, you should be ready to learn from the noble elements of other religions rather than criticizing other religions and condemning them. In fact it should enrich itself by blending into it all the acceptable features of other faiths. In fact such a thing is even a matter of duty, which each religion to discharge according to Gandhi. Otherwise it is fanaticism to imagine that you cannot accept anything form other faiths.

9. Reverential Study of Other Scriptures:

One of the best ways to learn from other religions according to Gandhi is a reverential study of others' scriptures. Once he remarked: "I have recommended to my Christian friend a prayerful and sympathetic study of others' scriptures of the world." Likewise he also told the Hindus: "your lives will be incomplete unless you reverently study the teachings of Jesus." Giving his own example, Gandhi says: "When I was turning over the pages of the sacred books of different faiths for my own satisfaction, I became sufficiently familiar for my purpose with Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Hinduism…Refreshing my memory of those days, I do not find I ever had the slightest desire to criticize any of those religions merely because they were not my own, but read each sacred book in a spirit of reverence, and found the same fundamental morality in each.

10. Complementarity of Religions

Thus according to Gandhi, each faith would prove complementary to other, provided that the followers of each religion were not indifferent to their religion, but rather tried to live seriously their own faith commitment, while at the same time take seriously the truth value of other faiths as well. In fact all the important faiths were held by Gandhi to be complementary to one another, in no case to be exclusive. We may not have fully understood the true meaning of the inter-dependence and inter-relation of different faiths, may be because we are too indifferent representatives of our own faiths. If only we became seriously genuine seekers of truth, by following our respective faiths, we would have already seen interdependence and interrelation of various faiths.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What are Gandhi's views regarding nature of religion and religions?

……………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………….

2) Elucidate the meaning of "Equality of Religions"

……………………………………………………………………………………..
……………………………………………………………………………………..
……………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………….
3) How could religions grow and be complementary to one another

……………………………………………………………………………………..
……………………………………………………………………………………..
……………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………….

Conclusion

In short then, a real interreligious harmony would emerge in a multi religious society when its members realize the basic unity of the various religions as well as the importance of the diversity and the need to promote a spirit of equimindedness to one another and the need to learn from one another and to be complementary to one another. What is unique of Gandhi is that establishes all these as part of his quest for Truth. Synthesizing two models of God – theistic God and impersonal Absolute – Gandhi speaks of God both as personal and as absolute Truth. It is with reference to that Absolute Truth that he validates all religions as equal paths to truth and calls for more positive love and respect towards all than just religious tolerance.

4.5 LET US SUM UP

I.1. While ‘Religious tolerance’ is no more than the willingness of the adherents of a dominant religion to accept or allow other religions to exist, although they disagree with those religious beliefs and practices, look upon them with disapproval as inferior, mistaken or harmful, ‘Religious harmony’ implies that each religion accepts and respects the other religions on the basis of this realization 'Truth is One but the Paths are Many,' and acceptance of the fact that the goal of all religions is essentially the same despite their differences in worship-forms, belief-systems, and lifestyles.

2. Religion plays a major role in the Indian way of life. It is a matter of uniqueness that despite the variety of religions, they are able to be active and vibrant in the day to day life of its adherents, forming the warp and woof of the ordinary life of the people, and organizing their life peacefully and in harmony. Already from the ancient times India has been promoting or at least tolerating diversity of religions. Apart from having sheltered all the sematic religions, India was also the birthplace of four great religions (Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism) and has been an important home to one of oldest religions of the world (Zoroastrianism). Its unique merit lies not merely in accommodating these religions in its social fabric, but also in assimilating and absorbing many of the features and waving them all into a synthetic whole. But it is to the credit of Gandhi that he was greatly responsible for creating that vision of religious harmony in the Indian Republic. Here it must be noted that Gandhi was not motivated by political expediency. But it was as a matter of policy, and a voluntary choice that Gandhi worked for establishing in India religious harmony rather than merely religious tolerance.

3. Already Hinduism, the most predominant of religion of India, is a family of religions and cultures within whose umbrella numerous sects of religions began to flourish and are still flourishing with some common traits binding them into a cluster. Although Jainism and Buddhism grew s independent religious yet, they all share some kind of umbrella with the following features. The most common of such traits are belief in the supremacy of human being

with a transcendental element within, that the soul, purity of soul in itself but polluted by the karmaic particles, belief in Karma, a force that determines the quality of each birth, depending on how well one behaved in a past life. repeatedly goes through a cycle of rebirths, and the emphasis on human effort with or without the grace of God.
3. Islam never interfered with India's multi-religious spectrum. Even when the Muslim rule was reigning supreme in the major portion of the Subcontinent for nearly six centuries, the local communities of various religions were not interfered, but rather they all were allowed to retain their identity as it is evident from the survival of the different calendars have been continuing to exist. Especially during the rule Akbar the Great, interreligious dialogue became a respectable thing, 'the pursuit of reason' was made the criterion to address difficult problems of social harmony rather than 'reliance on faith-tradition'. His pluralist commitment is clear from the fact that he filled his court with non-Muslim intellectuals and artists. As regards Christianity, the influence it has exerted on the overall reform of India as well as on nation building is uncontestable especially in fields of education, health services, and selfless and self-sacrificing service to the poor. Even today 90% of the beneficiaries in almost every educational institution are from other communities. Similarly it was the Missionaries' social works that actually set the developmental trend first in Indian society.
II.1.The Vedic culture was dynamic enough to accommodate with the local culture and spread towards the East and even the South. However the factors that impeded its growth were: over-emphasis on the rites and ascetic practices, the too abstract approach of the Upanishads, and the too rigorous social structure to be accepted by all the people with an equal appeal. However with the rise of Buddhism and Jainism that struck at the roots of the caste system, moderated the rigour of asceticism, ritualism, the ancient Hinduism began to reconstruct itself with its demands for the minimum of common religious belief and practice, allowing complete cultural autonomy to the different local people in such things as dress, food, language, and mores and manners, could easily make a countrywide appeal to all sorts of people, races and language. This is how the ancient Hindu culture became the most tolerant religion.

2. Though Muslims posed politically many a hostile challenge between 1206 and 1526, at the secular level there resulted a synthetic Indian cultural renaissance, creating "Indo-Muslim" fusion of cultures, through lasting syncretic monuments in architecture, music, literature and clothing. The Urdu language (literally meaning "horde" or mass in various Turkic dialects) was born during this period as a result of the intermingling of the local speakers of Sanskritic Prakrits with immigrants speaking Persian, Turkic and Arabic under the Muslim rulers. At the religious level, though there arose religious tolerance, mainly on account of the preaching of Hindu Bhakti movement as well as the Muslim Sufism. The political policy of the early Moghul Emperors, especially that of Akbar the Great was conducive to the emergence of religious tolerance.

3. As a reaction to this onslaught of modern civilization, there arose several reformers from both Hindus and Muslims. Among the Hindus the Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj, and the Servants of Indian Society. Among the Indian Muslims, there arose some great men Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. Likewise the reforms wrought by Badruddin Tyabji (Tyab Ali) who realized the need of Muslims acquiring education and scientific temper of modernity.
The approach of the early reformers consisted in making a distinction between the religious and the secular, in accusing the religion of the British rulers as boastful and forcibly imposing on the local etc, while however they were ready to take on the modern ideas and incorporate them into

to the socio, economic fabric of Indian culture, and political fields. The extremists hated the English rulers both in their political and religious and worked for liberation through violence and arson.

4. The uniqueness of Gandhi is that he differed both from the earlier reformers as well as the extremists. What Gandhi envisaged was a common culture as the basis of Indian nationhood in which people of all religions will be not only not in conflict with one another but also each religion will be respecting one another, and will be working for the common task of enriching humanity. The principal feature of the Indian nationhood will be secular in character, not in the western sense of putting aside the religious influences from the state, but imbuing politics with a spirit of deep religiousness, expressing itself in equal respect for each one of the religions, that are present in India. No one religion will be accepted as the official, state religion but all religions would be allowed to flourish freely in their own respective spheres. To put it differently, it is no more tolerance of religious but religious harmony that was aimed at by Gandhi**.**

5. The Hindus and the Muslims were not only two largest communities in the country, but also they were more antagonistic with one another. Once the Hindu-Muslim unity was established, unity with all other communities could be further strengthened. Gandhi never found any serious differences between the Hindus and the other minority communities like the Christians, the Sikhs and the Parsis. That is why Gandhi turned to the question of Hindu-Muslim unity.

III.1. About the nature of the religion, Gandhi said that every religion is a revelation of truth, in as much as it is supplying a felt-need in the spiritual progress of humanity, embodies a common motivating force, namely the desire to uplift the human life and give it purpose, as illustrated by certain persons of Attainment, Realization and Perfection.

However when God is revealed to human beings it would become necessarily many and different depending upon the different temperaments of human beings and climatic conditions. Again the one unalloyed Truth, beyond all speech, when passes through human medium, becomes conditioned, limited, and imperfect humans, for no other reason than the human instrumentality involved in receiving, expressing, and interpreting it. In other words, “all religions are true, and equally imperfect too. They are more or less true.”

2. Equality of religions simply means the basic unity among religions, namely that the sum total of a faith with its particular frame work of cult, creed and code is as good and helpful to its followers as the sum total of another faith to its own followers to attain perfection within its own frame work. Each religion has the Truth as is proved by the fact of saints in religions, and is equally imperfect in the sense that the Truth is received, expressed through the imperfect medium of human language and is interpreted by further imperfect humans.

3. Granted that every religion is imperfect, there is always a need to re-interpret, re-new and re-juvenate, is bound to constantly grow from imperfection to perfection, from less perfection to greater perfection, from untruth to truth and from periphery to the center. This growth can be accelerated by learning from one another, through reverential study of the Holy Scriptures of other religions, and adopting the acceptable features of other religions, and never approaching other religion with a critical outlook as muchas on one’s own religion.

4.6 KEY WORDS

Toleration, Tolerance, Harmony, Karma, Thirthankaras, Anekantavada, Buddha, Sikh, AdiGranth, Gurudwara, Ahura Mazda, Angra Mainyu, Dharma Shahstras, Urdu, Constructive

Programmes, Communal Unity, Unity of Religions, Plurality of Religions, Equality of Religions, Equimindedness, Complementarity of Religions

4.7 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

S.Abid Husain. *Gandhiji and Communal Unity.* New Delhi: Orient Longmans for Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1969.
A.Pushparajan. “Gandhi’s Trans-religious Concept of Truth.” in Ed. George Karuvelil. *Romancing the Sacred? Towards an Indian Christian Philosophy of Religion.* ACPI Books 8. Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2007. pp. 373 – 406.

A.Pushparajan. *From Conversion to Fellowship: The Hindu Christian Encounter in the Gandhian Perspective*. Dialogue Series 6. Allahabad: St. Paul Publications, 1990.

A.Pushparajan. *Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies.* Vol.7. No.2. July 2004. pp. 29-43.

M.K. Gandhi. *In Search of the Supreme.* Vol.III. Ed. V.B Kher. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1962.

Kachappilly, Joy. *Gandhi and Truth: An Approach to the Theology of Religion*. New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2005.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

Indira Gandhi National Open University
School of Interdisciplinary and
Trans-disciplinary Studies

MPYE – 015

Gandhian Philosophy

Block 3

GANDHIAN SOCIO-POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

UNIT 1
Ahimsa* and *Satyagraha

UNIT 2
Swarajya* and *Swadeshi

UNIT 3
Sarvodaya

UNIT 4
Caste and Social Order

Expert Committee

Prof. Gracious Thomas
Director, School of
Social Work, IGNOU

Prof. Renu Bharadwaj
School of Humanities
IGNOU

Prof. George
Panthanmackel,
Senior Consultant,
IGNOU

Dr. M. R. Nandan
Govt. College for
Women
Mandya - Mysore

Dr. Kuruvila
Pandikattu
Jnana-deepa
Vidyapeeth
Ramwadi, Pune

Dr Babu Joseph
CBCI Centre
New Delhi

Prof. Tasadduq Husain
Aligarh Muslim
University, Aligarh

Dr. Bhuvaneswari
Lavanya Flats
Gangai Amman Koil
Thiruvanmiyur
Chennai – 600 041

Dr. Alok Nag
Vishwa Jyoti Gurukul
Varanasi

Dr. Jose Kuruvachira
Salesian College &
IGNOU Study Centre
Dimapur, Nagaland

Dr. Sathya Sundar
Sethy
Dept of Humanities
IIT, Chennai.

Dr. Joseph Martis
St. Joseph’s College
Jeppu, Mangalore – 2

Dr. Jaswinder Kaur
Dhillon
147, Kabir park
Opp. GND University
Amristar – 143 002

Prof. Y.S. Gowramma
Principal,
College of Fine Arts,
Manasagangotri
Mysore – 570 001

Block Preparation

Units 1 & 3	Libin Joseph Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth Ramwadi, Pune.
Unit 2	Dr. Kuruvila Pandikattu Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth Ramwadi, Pune.
Unit 4	Dr. P.I. Devaraj Payannur, Kerala.

Content Editor

Dr. V. John Peter
St. Joseph’s Philosophical College,
Kotagiri, Tamil Nadu.

Format Editor

Prof. Gracious Thomas
IGNOU, New Delhi.

Programme Coordinator

Prof. Gracious Thomas
IGNOU, New Delhi.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

BLOCK INTRODUCTION

Gandhi was the consummate problematizer of conventional ideas about human society. For instance, instead of insisting only on political independence from colonial rule, he devoted a great deal of attention to purging Indian society of indigenous patterns of domination. Upholding the values of *ahimsa*, *satyagraha, swaraj*, *swadesi* and *sarvodaya*, and reinterpreting the discriminatory caste system as social order, Gandhian socio-political philosophy has been very important. *himsa* is the principle of the sacredness of life and not merely a negative virtue; it involves the positive doing of good quite as much as the negative refusal to do harm. The meaning of *satyagraha* is beyond the meaning of 'Passive Resistance.' *satyagraha* is the law of love or the way of love for all. The goal of *satyagraha* includes the solution of human problems. *Satyagraha* aims at moralization of politics, fighting injustice and tyranny, settling social, political and economical disputes, establishing effective democracy, laying foundations of a new social order based on justice and equality and paying the way for world peace.

Unit 1 on *Ahimsa* and *Satyagraha,* explains the concept and practice of both these values promoted by Gandhi. *Ahimsa* is not mere pacifism. It is dynamic positive force. It is active condemnation of untruth, without violence, anger or malice. Passive resistance, as commonly understood in the West in its historical setting, is a weapon of the weak, of the unarmed and helpless. Love has no place in it. In contra-distinction to passive resistance, *satyagraha* is the law of love or the way of love for all.

Units 2 and 3 portrays Gandhian vision of *Swaraj, Swadeshi* and *Sarvodaya.* Gandhi designed a new trinity to achieve his vision of a new non-violent social order. He called it *Sarvodaya*, *Swaraj* and *Swadeshi*. *Swaraj*, 'self-government' works to bring about a social, self-discipline and self-restraint. Gandhi opposed mass production, favouring production by the masses. *Sarvodaya* which aims at the integral liberation of every individual. *Sarvodaya* accepts the universalization of self-government. *Sarvodaya* wants to elevate the people. The *Sarvodaya* workers and all those who have faith in the concept of *Sarvodaya*, should have clarity about their goal and should ensure the purity of means. The basic technic for effectuating socialism is supposed to be nationalization whereas *Sarvodaya* holds villagism. Within the context of *Sarvodaya*, *Swaraj* and *Swadeshi*, taking care of each other and caring for the Earth, constantly and regularly, development emerges through *seva* and is *sattvic* development.

In **Unit 4,** the history of caste system is dealt in brief and tracing the roots of discriminatory caste system in Indian society. The views of Mahatma Gandhi on caste system and untouchability are paid due attention with an objective evaluation. We see that he defended *varna* system very much but was against the then existing caste system of India which is a perverted form of *varna* system. This also made him to fight against untouchability.

UNIT 1 *AHIMSA* AND *SATYAGRAHA*

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

Contents

1.0 Objectives
1.1 Introduction
1.2 The Meaning of *Ahimsa* and *Satyagraha*
1.3 The Dynamic Meaning of *Ahimsa* and *Satyagraha*
1.4 The Goal of *Ahimsa* and *Satyagraha*
1.5 The Socio-political Significance of *Ahimsa* and *Satyagraha*
1.6 The Principles of *Satyagraha* Technique
1.7 The Application of *Satyagraha* Technique
1.8 Criticism on Gandhian Concept of *Ahimsa* and *Satyagraha*
1.9 Let Us Sum Up
1.10 Key Words
1.11 Further Readings and References

1.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this unit is to introduce the students to socio-political significance of Gandhian concept of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha*. It would also enable one to know how to apply these principles in one's social and political interventions. Along with these, it is intended to evaluate and compare adequately the present day political system with Gandhian vision.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Ahimsa and *satyagraha* imply great significance in the life and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. They were two socio-political weapons he used in achieving his various goals. *Ahimsa* and *satyagraha* were not new ideals but they are the eternal principles of life preached for thousands of years. However, these ideals lacked universality and fullness of meaning. They were regarded as cloistered virtues. It was the great adventure of Gandhi that he reinterpreted and restated these fundamental principles of human behaviour in new ways and showed their universality. He made several experiments with them and with great zeal applied them in an original way practically in every aspect of human life especially in the social and political fields. In Gandhian philosophy all his main concepts like truth, *ahimsa*, *satyagraha*, *sarvodaya*, etc., are not individual and independent concepts but they are interrelated. *Satyagraha* is nothing but the implementation of truth and *ahimsa* in the different walks of life. *Satyagraha* is a logical development of the doctrine of *ahimsa*. The history of Indian culture is the history of the evolution of the concept of *ahimsa*, and *satyagraha* is a practical application of *ahimsa* to politics. *Ahimsa* is the foundation of *satyagraha*, the "irreducible minimum" to which *satyagraha* adheres to. The idea and practice of *satyagraha* constitute the heart and soul of Gandhi's belief in non-violence.

1.2 THE MEANING OF *AHIMSA* AND *SATYAGRAHA*

The literal meaning of the Sanskrit word *Ahimsa* is non-injury' or 'non-killing'. But Gandhi adopted the word 'non-violence' which means refraining from the use of physical force capable of causing injury or death to the opponent. Even though Gandhi admits that he could not succeed in defining *ahisma* fully the meaning of this word developed further in the hands of Gandhi. *Ahimsa* means and includes non-violence in thoughts, words and deeds towards all sentient beings. It has been used interchangeably with simple inaction and with direct action. The idea of *satyagraha* was not originally conceived by Gandhi. The idea was found in religious anthologies like the Upanishads, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Gita, the Quran and many others. It was also practiced by eminent personalities like Socrates, Plato, Jesus, Ashoka and others.

The term *satyagraha* is derived from a compound word in Sanskrit, *satya* and *agraha*. *Satya* itself is derived from *sat*, which means being, that which exists. *Satya* means that which is in accordance with *sat* or being, that is, truth. *Agraha* means holding fast, adherence or insistence. Thus the compound word *satyagraha* means clinging to truth, holding fast to truth, insistence on truth or firm adherence to truth. In the socio-political field *satyagraha* was a kind of resistant movement against the unjust laws. Gandhi started this movement in South Africa in 1906 with the Indians who were suffering from the unjust laws. In the early stages Gandhi himself called this movement 'Passive Resistance,' but later he felt ashamed of using an English word which could not be easily understood and used by the Indians. Thus, he adopted the term *satyagraha* which would give almost the same meaning of 'Passive Resistance.'

1.3 THE DYNAMIC MEANING OF *AHIMSA* AND *SATYAGRAHA*

Even though the word *ahimsa* is equated with the English word 'non-violence' it connotes a negative meaning, almost a passive condition. However, the term *ahimsa* suggests a dynamic state of mind in which power is released. *Ahimsa* is negative in its meaning but positive in its approach to life i.e. doing good to others. According to Gandhi, strength does not come from physical capacity but it comes from an indomitable will. So *Ahimsa* is not just non-violence but strength of will. Violence checks this energy within, and is ultimately disruptive in its consequences, *ahimsa*, properly understood is invincible.

Ahimsa is not mere pacifism. It is dynamic positive force. It is active condemnation of untruth, without violence, anger or malice – an attitude both towards the human and the sub-human creation. *Ahimsa* is the principle of the sacredness of life and not merely a negative virtue; it involves the positive doing of good quite as much as the negative refusal to do harm. The idea of *ahimsa* is purity and truth rather than mere compassion or pity. It does not mean helping the evil-doer to continue their wrong or tolerating it by passive acquiescence. On the contrary, love requires resisting the wrong-doer by dissociating oneself from him even though it may offend him or injure him physically.

Truth and Love is central to the whole concept of *ahimsa*. Gandhi often stressed that a seeker after truth must imbibe the faith of *ahimsa*. Gandhi stressed that the kingdom of God could he achieved by resorting to the twin principles of *ahimsa* and truth. In the ordinary sense, love means loving an object which is good but to Gandhi, love is absolute where the person, out of love, imposes suffering on himself, irrespective of whether the object on the other party is good or bad. Non-violence implies love of other human beings and love is directly related to God and truth.

As the Gandhian *ahimsa* is much more profound than the ordinary understanding of *ahimsa*, his notion of *satyagraha* also is more comprehensive than the ordinary meaning. The meaning of *satyagraha* is beyond the meaning of 'Passive Resistance.' Passive resistance, as commonly understood in the West in its historical setting, is a weapon of the weak, of the unarmed and helpless. It does not eschew violence as a matter of principle but only because of lack of the means of violence, or out of sheer expedience. It would use arms if and when they are available. Love has no place in it. There is no place for service of the people or constructive activity in it. In contra-distinction to passive resistance, *satyagraha* is the law of love or the way of love for all. It eschews violence absolutely as a matter of principle, at all stages and in all forms. It can never go hand in hand with any kind of violent activity involving injury to person or property. The idea behind it is not to destroy or harass the opponent, but to convert or win him over any sympathy, patience and self-suffering.

In ordinary *satyagraha*, we try to get the truth by hook or by crook. Either we will keep on fasting, or we will go on strike, and in that way we try to get things done. But true *satyagraha*, from the spiritual point of view, is not so. There we want to see the truth through surrender to the Will of God. The seeker wants to pursue the truth, but while pursuing the truth he feels the necessity of surrendering to the Will of God. So in the spiritual life, *satyagraha* means total devoted surrender to the Will of Truth, and this Truth is God.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Give an explanation on the etymology of the term *satyagraha*.

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………...................

2) How is *ahimsa* different from pacifism?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………

3) "The real meaning of *satyagraha* is more profound than the meaning of Passive Resistance." Illustrate the notion.

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………

1.4 THE GOAL OF *AHIMSA* AND *SATYAGRAHA*

For Gandhi *ahimsa* and *satyagraha* were tools to social change. A satyagrahi has immense faith in the inherent goodness of human nature and he believes that it responds to love, to service, to suffering and to sacrifice. *Satyagraha* is never launched for personal gain but is always used for the good of others. A *satyagrahi* who is actively non-violent refuses to obey repugnant laws and cheerfully suffers the consequences. If there is a government that does not concede the reasonable and just demands of people, a *satyagrahi* would say that they would no longer be their petitioners, or be governed by them, or have any dealing with them. They would suffer the brutal might of the tyrant cheerfully but unbendingly.

The goal of *satyagraha* includes the solution of human problems. *Satyagraha* aims at moralization of politics, fighting injustice and tyranny, settling social, political and economical disputes, establishing effective democracy, laying foundations of a new social order based on justice and equality and paving the way for world peace. The *satyagrahi* peruses his path with the single-mindedness. When he encounters evil he resists it with all his might. The word 'defeat' does not find a place in his vocabulary. While fighting obstinately for his cause, he is ever willing to compromise with his opponents, provided that it does not involve humiliation and surrender of essentials.

Gandhi used *satyagraha* as a process of conversion. He, throughout his life, worked for the conversion or the correction of the evil-doers. He believed that suffering was a more potent and effective method of conversion than reasoning and discussion. Voluntary suffering will dominate the animal aspect of the opponent and will arouse the good aspect of his nature and will help him to become a better human being. As a moral weapon, *satyagraha* is a peaceful protest against the laws, customs and practices which one finds contrary to the dictates of one's conscience. It aims at cleansing of the whole atmosphere and voluntary change of the heart and mind of all parties to a conflict.

The goal of individual and group *satyagraha* is not to crush, defeat or punish the tyrant. It is not even to harm or embarrass him, though the resistance and suffering may, as a matter of fact, cause the wrong-doer embarrassment. Positively a *satyagrahi* will always try to overcome evil by good, anger by love, untruth by truth and *himsa* by *ahimsa*. The way to treat the opponent as a member of the family is to give him the same credit for honesty of purpose which the *satyagrahi* claims for himself.

1.5 THE SOCIO-POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF *AHIMSA* AND *SATYAGRAHA*

Even though *ahimsa* and *stayagaraha* were not new doctrines of Gandhian philosophy, never before it was used for political purposes. They enter into the very fibre of one's being and revolutionize all sides of one's life such as individual, domestic, social, political and economic. Non-violence resulted in good will for the British and transformed their hearts. *Ahimsa* in the hands of Gandhi became an efficacious social and political technique of action. According to Gandhi in violence there is nothing invisible, but non-violence on the other hand is three-fourths invisible, and hence the effect is in the inverse ratio to its invisibility.

Gandhi himself admits that *ahimsa* is a creed, the breath of his life, but he has never placed it before the country or the Congress as a creed, but as a political method for the solution of political problems. Gandhi was of the view that the social order should be established on truth and non-violence. Gandhi's non-violent society would be a perfect democracy where each unit of a village even was to be self-sufficient, independent and free. If there is a necessity of the state at all, it should be non-violent in its nature. Initially in his non-violent society there would be no necessity of military or police. Great emphasis in this society was laid on rural life and decentralization. The non-violent strategy demands a more rigorous training than the violent one. Conflict is inherent in social, economic or political situations. The non-violent technique claims creative and constructive results, after creating a 'crisis-packed' situation. Negotiation became imperative. The forces of understanding and cordiality are released.

Satyagraha is employed not only to solve the national problems but also to solve the international problems. In South Africa, this weapon was employed against the cruel and unjust policy of the government. Indians in South Africa were harassed, humiliated and debarred from all rights and privileges. According to Gandhi war is a product of envy, ill-will and misunderstanding between nations. The factors that lead the nations to war are the same as those that lead individuals to moral and spiritual degradation. Gandhi holds that war can be abolished forever and peace and harmony can be established between nations by an extension of the principle of truth and non-violence.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) The goal of *satyagraha* includes the solution of human problems. Explain.

…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………

2) How does *satyagraha* function as a means of conversion?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………

3) How did Gandhi give a new socio-political outlook to *ahimsa* and *satyagraha*?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

1.6 THE PRINCIPLES OF *SATYAGRAHA* TECHNIQUE

The basic assumption of *satyagraha* is the essential goodness of human nature. It holds that temporary aberrations of brother-humans would pass away if the right attitude, namely, of love and self-suffering, is adopted. The origin of this relationship based on love is to be sought in the intuitive and mystic realization of the oneness of all life. The *satyagrahi* does not feel that his blood-relations alone are his family. It is no rhetoric when Gandhi said that the whole world was his family. Thus, *satyagrahi* looks upon no one as his enemy. Everyone is a friend, a fellow being and a brother or sister for him.

The *satyagrahi*, instead of physically resisting wrong, suffers it bravely and cheerfully as something done by his or her own brother or sister and thus attempts to reach the heart of the wrong-doer. He separates the evil from the evil-doer and while trying to eradicate evil, tries to save the evil-doer by making him or her cognizant of the evil. The *satyagrahi* makes the opponent feel that he or she is loved and respected and that he or she must divest himself or herself of the evil that harbours or clings to. By suffering himself or herself and by assuring his or her opponent of his or her physical safety, he or she sets him or her thinking about the wrong he or she has committed. According to Gandhi one must non-co-operate with his actions and at the same time one must show loving tendency towards him or her as a fellow being.

Whenever there is a conflict or grievance or a wrong which can be redressed by the application of mass or group *satyagraha*, a *sayagrahi* must first convince himself or herself of the truthfulness of the cause. If after a full, careful and disinterested investigation he finds that grievance is real the next thing he or she has to see is whether those who are suffering from it are keenly feeling the necessity to get rid of it. As soon as a *satyagrahi* realizes the enormity of the grievance, he or she should bring it to the notice of the perpetrators of the wrong in the gentlest language possible and try to convince them of their responsibility for it. Then he or she should give due and truthful publicity to the facts of the situation without any exaggeration. In the meanwhile, the *satygrahi* must make himself or herself sure whether he or she is ready to suffer and follow the path of *satyagraha*. If a substantial majority of the people agree to offer *satyagraha* they should be strengthened in their resolve. If a majority is not willing, it is no bar to launch individual *satyagraha* to rouse the consciousness of the sufferers and set an example.

The people concerned must, first of all, take a pledge and begin with a programme of self-purification. The solemnity of the pledge and the arduous task ahead need not in any way frighten the people. They should rather stiffen them in their resolve. It should be emphasized that the weapon they are using is morally superior to the struggle unflinchingly. It is necessary that *satyagraha* campaigns should not be dependent for finance upon outsides as far as possible. Whatever finance is required should be locally raised and very economically spent. Correct account must be kept of every pie collected and spent. If there are arrests, the people should willingly submit and while in prison obey the jail rules not repugnant to their religion or self-respect. One should conform to the jail regulations unless one launches a campaign for prison reform there should be no heart-burning over the arrest of people. In disobeying any order or law that prohibits a certain person from carrying on his or her legitimate duty, one need not have knowledge of the finer points of *satyagraha* technique. He is to declare his or her intention to disobey the order, and invite the penalty cheerfully. But it is absolutely essential that he or she should be civil throughout.

1.7 THE APPLICATION OF *SATYAGRAHA* TECHNIQUE

Gandhi took recourse to the various methods of *satyagraha* during his life-time for the success of *satyagraha* movement. These techniques were employed and experimented by Gandhi and his co-workers for the correction of social, political, economic and religious wrongs and for the conversion of wrong doers. Among the many techniques let us see some important techniques.

Fasting

Fasting is the most potent and effective method of conversion and correction. Gandhi described it to be the last resort to be used when all other techniques fail. Fasts were undertaken to check the act of violence, to remove the bitterness or even to purify socio-political atmosphere. Fasting as a technique of *satyagraha*, was first employed by him in South Africa for the purpose of self-purification, then in India for various social and political causes. Self-purification though a goal of fasting is also in some sense, a condition for fasting. Without self-purification on the part of a *satyagrahi*, a fast cannot be successful. Fasting according to him is a spiritual weapon addressed to God. A *satyagrahi* who undertakes fast must be free from anger and malice and should obey the call one's conscience. Gandhi undertook fasting seventeen times during his lifetime for a total period of one hundred and thirty eight days. He undertook fast unto death for various genuine grievances. According to him, fasting unto death is an integral part of *satyagraha* programme.

Non-Cooperation

Non-cooperation, as a technique of settling domestic and social disputes and correcting the unjust and immoral government, was existent even before Gandhi. However, he approved this as a method of *satyagraha* in September, 1920 in the special session of the Indian National Congress at Calcutta to secure redress of Punjab and Khilafat wrongs. Non-cooperation should be employed mainly in four stages, viz, giving up of titles and resignation of honorary posts, calling off of government servants, the withdrawal of the police, and the military and the suspension of taxes. Non-cooperation should not be along with violent lines, but along with non-violent lines. Non-cooperation was meant to resist all domestic, social and political injustices. Non-cooperation, according to him, is not only a domestic weapon, but also a political weapon. In political sphere, he employed this method not only against the unjust and improper governmental order, but also against all unjust and unfair authorities and institutions.

Civil Disobedience

In the view of Gandhi, civil disobedience should be undertaken as a last resort when all methods of *satyagraha* are employed and they fail. Civil disobedience is the inherent birthright of the citizens. It is to resist the unjust and immoral laws of the state by disobeying them. It becomes a sacred duty of the citizens when the state becomes lawless or corrupt. It can be offered by those who are not attracted by criminal disobedience or violence. Criminal disobedience leads to social and political disintegration. Disobedience combined with civility is strictly nonviolent. For Gandhi, in order that disobedience may be civil, it must be sincere, respectful, restrained, and never defiant; it must be based upon some well understood principle, must not be capricious and above all, must have no ill-will or hatred behind it. In India, he and his followers employed this method while distilling salt from seawater and violating unjust orders of the government.

Peaceful Picketing

The aim of peaceful picketing was to put social, economic and political pressure on the government and to create political consciousness and Swadeshi spirit amongst the masses. This technique was employed by Gandhi for the first time in 1907 during his South African *satyagraha* struggle. According to Gandhi, picketing is different from *dharna*. *Dharna* is a form of passive resistance. Picketing is non-violent in spirit, whereas *dharna* is violent in spirit. By *dharna*, he meant, sitting down or lying flat at the oppressors' door to block the way and inviting them to go for their work by treading on the bodies of those sitting or lying.

Constructive Programme

Gandhi’s aim of *satyagraha* was not only to replace the existing socio-political order, but also to construct a new one in its place. The positive side of Gandhi’s *satyagraha* programme is called ‘constructive programme,’ which he presented to India, through the Congress, in 1920; but it got a definite shape in 1941. He always attached more importance to constructive works than to civil disobedience due to three main reasons. They are;

1. Civil disobedience without constructive works becomes criminal and ineffective. Performance of constructive activity supplies civility to disobedience.
2. The greater the cultivation of the habit of performing constructive works, the less the need of offering civil disobedience.
3. Gandhi believed that every reform comes from within, not from without. Constructive programme offers an opportunity of building oneself from within.

Other than these, the *satyagraha* techniques include persuasion and propaganda, self-suffering and moral force, strikes, *hartal*, books, weeklies and pamphlets, imprisonment, boycott, no-tax campaign, etc.

1.8 CRITICISM ON GANDHIAN CONCEPT OF *AHIMSA* AND *SATYAGRAHA*

Even though Gandhian *ahimsa* and *satyagraha* were rich in its content and application, there are a few who make criticism on them. Let us see some of them in brief.

1. Gandhian thought has many inconsistencies and ambiguities. Sometimes he stood for absolute and sometimes for relative non-violence. At times he permitted violence. All life is accompanied by some violence and it is an inherent necessity of life in the body. Strictly speaking, no activity and no industry is possible without a certain amount of violence.
2. Gandhi’s views on war and defence are ambiguous and seriously conflicting. As an apostle of non-violence, he condemned war, and yet he gave moral support to three imperial wars. In the Boer War and the First World War he extended active co-operation to the British. In Second World War, Gandhi was of the opinion that the allies could keep their armed forces in India and make it the base of operations against the potential Japanese attack.
3. Like militaries who usually overestimate their strength, Gandhi, generally over-rated the strength of his weapon of non-violence and was disillusioned towards the close of his life.
4. *Satyagraha* is a non-violent weapon, but it may lead to violence if it is introduced prematurely. *Satyagraha* can be considered as a useless weapon by those who expect too much from it. He was considered an extremist in pressing his views. He was a saintly figure and he ignored the frailties of human nature.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

1) How did Gandhi use civil disobedience as a means of *satyagraha*?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………

2) Why did Gandhi give more importance to constructive programmes than to civil disobedience?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………

3) Write a criticism on Gandhi's notion of *ahimsa*?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………

1.9 LET US SUM UP

Gandhi extended the practice of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha* in all fields related to the day-to-day life of the individual men and women. In the active use both *ahimsa* and *satyagraha* stand as social and political weapons in fighting against evil and injustice; in inspiring masses with self-confidence in the matter of fighting with their own strength against all tyranny; and in proving many successful experiments to show that *satyagraha* is a workable method and can be a substitute for violence and even violent war. Gandhi wielded the moral weapons of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha* to end domestic, social, political, economical, religious and cultural problems and conflicts. Removal of untouchablity, communal harmony, solution of unemployment and illiteracy, non-possession, India's independence, economic and religious equality were the social, economic and political targets to be achieved through this great weapon. Even though we feel that nothing new or unique is there in Gandhian *ahimsa* and *satyagraha*, on a deeper analysis we find that there is much newness and meaning in them. His philosophy of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha* transcends all regional, religious and cultural barriers. It is global and it comprehends not only humanity but the whole living world.

1.10 KEY WORDS

Ahimsa - The literal meaning of the Sanskrit word *ahimsa* is non-injury' or 'non-killing'. In a wider perspective it means non-violence in thought, word and deed towards all sentient beings.

***Satyagraha* –** The literal meaning of the word *satyagraha* is clinging to truth, holding fast to truth, insistence on truth or firm adherence to truth. In the socio-political field *satyagraha* was a kind of resistant movement against the unjust laws.

Passive Resistance – 'Passive Resistance' is almost a subsequent English word for *satyagraha*. This term was used at the early phase of Gandhi's *satyagraha* movement.

Civil Disobedience - The Civil Disobedience Movement led by M K Gandhi, in the year 1930 was an important milestone in the history of Indian Nationalism. The essence of The Civil Disobedience Movement was defying of the British laws.

Peaceful Picketing – Picketing or protesting is a way to express the dissatisfaction publicly and forcefully, attempting to influence the public opinion or government policy. Peaceful protest is defined as a way to demonstrate without any loss of life, negative effect to public and country, and positively, non-violent.

1.11 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

Bari, S. A. *Gandhi's Doctrine of Civil Resistance*. New Delhi: Kalamkar Prakashan Pvt. Ltd., 1971.

Bose, Nirmal Kumar. *A Study of Satyagraha*. Poona: University of Poona, 1968.

Dhawan, G. N. *The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*. Bombay: The Popular Book Depot, 1946.

Diwakar, R. R. *Saga of Satyagraha*. Bombai: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1969.

Gaur, V. P. *Mahatma Gandhi: A Study of His Message of Non-violence*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1977.

Kotturan, George. *Ahimsa: Gautama to Gandhi.* New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1973.

Thakur, Gauri Kant. *Mahatma* Gandhi*'s Philosophy of Satyagraha.* Varanasi: Kishore Vidya Niketan, 1988.

UNIT 2 *SWARAJ* AND *SWADESHI*

Contents

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Basic Notions

2.3 Hind *Swaraj*

2.4 *Swaraj* and *Swadeshi:* Village as a Republic

2.5 *Swaraj* and *Swadeshi*: Historical Significance

2.6 Education and Upliftment of All

2.7 *Swaraj* in *Swadeshi:* in Gandhi's Own Words

2.8 Let Us Sum Up

2.9 Key Words

2.10 Further Readings and References

2.0 OBJECTIVES

- To inspire the students with Gandhian vision of *Swaraj* and *Swadeshi*.
- To find the historical significance of these terms.
- To figure out the contemporary relevance of these two terms.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit tries to understand the historical context and significance of two key concepts of Gandhi: *Swaraj* and *Swadeshi*.

2.2 BASIC NOTIONS

While the freedom struggle was in progress, Gandhi was working on ideas for a new social order for post-colonial India. He believed that there would be no point in getting rid of the British without getting rid of the centralised, exploitative and violent system of governance and the economics of greed that they pursued. Gandhi designed a new trinity to achieve his vision of a new non-violent social order. He called it *Sarvodaya*, *Swaraj* and *Swadeshi*. The first of the trinity was *Sarvodaya*, the 'upliftment of all'. "All rise' - not a few, as in capitalism, not even the greatest good of the greatest number as in socialism, but each and every one should be taken care of. That is *Sarvodaya*. This includes the care of the Earth - of animals, forests, rivers and land. Gandhi's vision is better encapsulated in the concept of biocracy (where the interest of all living beings, including nonhuman species, local and global ecosystems, and future generations are taken into account, because their interest is our interest) rather than democracy (SSS).

In such a situation we need an economic development as consensus and profitable for all. Not "the rising tide lifts all boats" but "everybody in the water gets to ride in a boat" and even more, the trees have standing. The second aspect of the Gandhian trinity is *Swaraj*, 'self-government'. *Swaraj* works to bring about a social transformation through small-scale, decentralised, self-organised and self-directed participatory structures of governance. It also implies self-transformation, self-discipline and self-restraint. Thus *Swaraj* is a moral, ethical, ecological and spiritual concept and therefore a *sattvic* method of governance. The third part of the trinity is *Swadeshi*, 'local economy'. Gandhi opposed mass production, favouring production by the masses. Work for him was as much a spiritual necessity as an economic one. So he insisted on the principle that every member of society should be engaged in manual work. Manufacturing in small workshops and adherence to arts and crafts feeds the body as well as the soul, he said. He believed that long-distance transportation of goods, competitive trading and relentless economic growth are *rajasic*, verging towards *tamasic*, because they destroy the fabric of human communities. Within the context of *Sarvodaya*, *Swaraj* and *Swadeshi*, taking care of each other and caring for the Earth, constantly and regularly, development emerges through *seva* and is *sattvic* development (SSS).

The English translation of *seva* as service does not convey the depth of its meaning. For example, one can be paid for a service but *seva* is offered as a gift. *Seva* implies devotion and a long-term commitment. It is good in itself, irrespective of results, outcomes and achievements. The person performing *seva* does not try to change the world but to serve the world. When one wishes to change others, there is a certain amount of *rajasic* hubris involved. When we want to change the world, we know what is good for the world and we want to shape it to our image and to our ends. The person engaged in serving the world accepts his or her limitations and offers himself or herself for the wellbeing of the other, believing that the other is none other than I, and I am none other than the other. There is no duality, nor separation between the one serving and the one served. Both exist in a web of relationships and both are seeking spiritual fulfilment as well as material and physical wellbeing. It was this spirit which inspired many thousands of Gandhian workers to commit themselves to *sattvic* development through service (SSS).

2.3 HIND *SWARAJ*

Hind Swaraj, the title of the first definitive writing of Mahatma Gandhi, and which continues to evoke critical interest the world over even now, literally means ‘self-rule in India’. This small book of about 30,000 words was written in Gujarat in November 1909 on board the ship during Gandhi's return trip from England to South Africa after an abortive mission, within 10 days, 40 of the 275 pages being written with left hand. As stated by Gandhiji himself: "I wrote the entire Hind *Swaraj* for my dear friend Dr. Pranjivan Mehta. All the argument in the book is reproduced almost as it took place with him." [CWMG 71: 238] It was published in the Indian Opinion in Natal and was soon banned by Government in India because it contained 'matter declared to be seditious'. On that, Gandhi published the English translation from Natal to show the innocuous nature of its contents. The ban was finally lifted on 21 December 1938.

A number of editions have been published thereafter, the most common being that published by Navjivan press in India in 1938 with the title *'Hind Swaraj*: the Indian Home Rule'. *Swaraj* lays stress on governance not by a hierarchical government, but self governance through individuals and community building. The focus is on political decentralization. Since this is against the political and social systems followed by Britain, Gandhi's concept of *Swaraj* laid stress on India discarding British political, economic, bureaucratic, legal, military, and educational institutions. The book has 20 chapters and 2 appendices. Some useful quotes from this book are given below:

Concept of *Swadeshi*

“God set a limit to man’s locomotive ambition in the construction of his body. Man immediately proceeded to discover means of overriding the limit. God gifted man with intellect that he might know his Marker. Man abused it so that he might forget his maker. I am so constructed that I can only serve my immediate neighbors, but in my conceit I pretend to have discovered that I must with my body serve every individual in the Universe.” [M. K. Gandhi, Hind *Swaraj*, Chap. X]

Why was India Lost?

"The English have not taken India; we have given it to them. They are not in India because of their strength, but because we keep them. When our Princes fought among themselves, they sought the assistance of Company Bahadur. That co-operation was versed alike in commerce and war. It was unhampered by questions of morality. Its object was to increase its commerce and to take money. The Hindus and the Mohammedans were at daggers drawn. This, too, gave the Company its opportunity and thus we created the circumstances that gave the Company its control over India. They wish to convert the whole world into a vast market for their goods. They will leave no stone unturned to reach the goal. It is my deliberate opinion that India is being ground down, not under the English heel, but under that of modern civilization. We are turning away from God.” [M. K. Gandhi, Hind *Swaraj*, Chap. VII & VIII]

Indian Civilization

“Civilization is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain mastery over our mind and our passions. So doing, we know ourselves. The Gujarati equivalent for civilization means ‘good conduct.” [M. K. Gandhi, Hind *Swaraj*, Chap. XIII] “The more we indulge our passions, the more unbridled they become. Our ancestors, therefore, set a limit to our indulgences. They saw that happiness was largely a mental condition.” [M. K. Gandhi, Hind *Swaraj*, Chap. XIII] “We have had no system of life-corroding competition. Each followed his own occupation or trade and charged a regulation wage. It was not that we did not know how to invent machinery, but our forefathers knew that, if we set our hearts after such things, we would become slaves and lose our moral fibre. They, therefore, after due deliberation decided that we should only do what we could with our hands and feet.” [M. K. Gandhi, Hind *Swaraj*, Chap.

XIII] “They further reasoned that large cities were a snare and a encumbrance and that people would not be happy in them, that there would be gangs of thieves and robbers, prostitution and vice flourishing in them and that poor men would be robbed by rich men. They were, therefore, satisfied with small villages.” [M. K. Gandhi, Hind *Swaraj*, Chap. XIII] “They saw that kings and their swords were inferior to the sword of ethics, and they, therefore, held the sovereigns of the earth to be inferior to the Rishis and the Fakirs.” [M. K. Gandhi, Hind *Swaraj*, Chap. XVI] “Justice was tolerably fair. The ordinary rule was to avoid courts. There were no touts to lure people into them. This evil, too, was noticeable only in and around capitals.” [M. K. Gandhi, Hind *Swaraj*, Chap. XIII] ”The tendency of Indian civilization is to elevate the moral being, that of the Western civilization is to propagate immorality.” [M. K. Gandhi, Hind *Swaraj*, Chap. XIII]

Swaraj Is Self-Rule

“It is *Swaraj* when we learn to rule ourselves. It is, therefore, in the palm of our hands. But such *Swaraj* has to be experienced, by each one for himself. One drowning man will never save another.” [M. K. Gandhi, Hind *Swaraj*, Chap. XIV] ”I believe that you want the millions of India to be happy, not that you want the reins of government in your hands. If that be so, we have to consider only one thing: how can the millions obtain self-rule?” [M. K. Gandhi, Hind *Swaraj*, Chap. XV]

Freedom from England

“If the English become Indianlized, we can accommodate them. If they wish to remain, in India along with their civilization, there is no room for them.” [M. K. Gandhi, Hind *Swaraj*, Chap. XIV]

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Briefly mention the new trinity Gandhi designed to achieve his vision of a new non-violent social order..

....

....

....

2) What is Hind *Swaraj*?

....

....

....

2.4 *SWARAJ* AND *SWADESHI*: VILLAGE AS A REPUBLIC

What Gandhi was looking for was what he called *Swaraj* and *Swadeshi*. These two terms taken together represent the type of society that Gandhi was looking for. *Swaraj*, very badly translates as independence/autonomy/home rule/self-rule. *Swadeshi* can be translated as self-sufficiency or self-reliance (Burke 2000). *Swaraj* for Gandhi was not simply a question of ousting the British from India and declaring independence. What it implied was a wholly different type of society. He did not want the British to be replaced by Indians doing exactly the same. If that was all they achieved, they would not have achieved true freedom but merely the same type of government run by a different set of men. He wanted the value system and life style of the British Raj to be done away with and totally replaced by a simpler, more spiritual, communal life. This new type of society, reflecting the old values of pre-colonial days, was to be based on the village. He stated that: “[I]ndependence must begin at the bottom. Thus every village will be a republic ... having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs. Thus, ultimately, it is the individual who is the unit. This does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbours or from the world... In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never-ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom.”

Therefore, Gandhi’s vision for a new India entailed that 'every religion has its full and equal place'. (That is why Gandhi was totally opposed to the partition of India). Equally, 'there would be no room for machines that would displace human labour and that would concentrate power in a few hands'. In his *Collected Works* there is a passage, written in 1942, that amplifies his ideas on the role of the village. He states that 'my idea of village *Swaraj* is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity' (Burke 2000). He continues: “Thus every villages first concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth. It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and playground for adults and children. Then, if there is more land available, it will grow useful money crops, thus excluding *ganja*, tobacco, opium and the like. The village will maintain a village theatre, school and public hail. It will have its own waterworks, ensuring clean water supply. This can be done through controlled wells or tanks. Education will be compulsory up to the final basic course. As far as possible every activity will be conducted on the co-operative basis. There will be no castes such as we have today with their graded untouchability. Non-violence with its technique of... non-cooperation will be the sanction of the village community. There will be a compulsory service of village guards who will be selected by rotation from the register maintained by the village. The government of the village will be conducted by a [council] of five persons annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. These will have all the authority and jurisdiction required. Since there will be no system of punishments in the accepted sense, this [council] will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office.”

Gandhi was quite certain that any village could become such a republic straight away without much interference even from the colonial government because he believed that their sole effective connection with the villages was the collection of village taxes. All that was needed was the will to do it. He referred to his ideal state as one of 'enlightened anarchy in which each person will become his own ruler'. It is interesting to see that throughout his writings on the autonomous self-sufficient village communities we see echoes of the anarchist lifestyles proposed by such writers as Tolstoy or Thoreau in the nineteenth century (Burke 2000).

2.5 *SWARAJ* AND *SWADESHI*: HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The first nationalistic sentiment among the members of the Indian National Congress was to representation in the government bodies. Dadabhai Naoroji successfully contested in an election and become the first Indian member in the British House of Commons (Friends of India 2007). Aware of the economic devastation that British rule had brought on the country, India's broad masses were responding eagerly to the nationalist message. But the nationalist movement was also becoming exceedingly divided between two poles representing radically different currents and tendencies. Whereas one side attempted to restrict the national movement to a struggle for political reforms, the other side sees the aspirations of the general public and called for the complete liberation from colonial rule. Bal Gangadhar Tilak eloquently and succinctly summarized the sentiments of the new and increasingly militant national movement. He spoke of British rule as having ruined trade, caused the collapse of industry, and destroyed the people's courage and abilities. Under the colonial regimen, Tilak asserted that the country was offered neither education, nor rights, nor respect for public opinion. Without prosperity and contentment, the Indian people suffered constantly from poverty, famine and drain. He believed that without political power Indian industry could not develop, the nation's youth could not be educated, and the country could win neither social reforms nor material welfare for its people (Friends of India 2007). *Swaraj* can mean generally self-governance but the word usually refers to Gandhi's concept for Indian independence from foreign domination. *Swaraj* lays stress on governance not by a hierarchical government, but self-governance through individuals and community building (Friends of India 2007).

Tilak was the first Indian nationalist to embrace *Swaraj* as the destiny of the nation. Tilak deeply opposed the British education system that ignored and defamed India's culture, history and values. He resented the denial of freedom of expression for nationalists, and the lack of any voice or role for ordinary Indians in the affairs of their nation. So he considered *Swaraj* as the natural and only solution. His popular slogan "*Swaraj* is my birthright, and I shall have it" became the source of inspiration for Indians. For Tilak the idea of *Swaraj* is not only an end to foreign rule but also an end to exploitative social traditions indigenous to the country. He knew that it is possible only by drawing our people belonging to all sections of society in to the national movement. His vision and his desire to achieve *Swaraj* through the mobilization of common people constituted a turning point in the independence movement. The Home Rule Movement that he started with other prominent members forced the British to concede that introduction of responsible Government was their final objective. His activism and his passionate advocacy, especially through the media, inspired an entire generation. Tilak wrote in the journal Kesari:

“When Hindus and Muslims jointly ask for *Swarajya* from a common platform, the British bureaucracy has to realize that its days are numbered.” (Friends of India 2007).

Gandhi had a more philosophical view of *Swaraj*. According to him, adopting *Swaraj* means implementing a system whereby state machinery is virtually nil, and the real power directly resides in the hands of people. Gandhi wrote "Independence begins at the bottom... A society must be built in which every village has to be self sustained and capable of managing its own affairs... It will be trained and prepared to perish in the attempt to defend itself against any onslaught from without... This does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbors or from the world. It will be a free and voluntary play of mutual forces... In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will ever widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose center will be the individual. Therefore the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it."

The *Swadeshi* movement was a successful economic strategy to remove the British Empire from power and improve economic conditions in India through following principles of *Swadeshi* (self-sufficiency). Strategies of the *Swadeshi* movement involved boycotting British products and the revival of domestic-made products and production techniques. *Swadeshi*, as a strategy, was a key focus of Gandhi who described it as the soul of *Swaraj* (Wikipedia 2011). Gandhi described *Swadeshi* as "a call to the consumer to be aware of the violence he is causing by supporting those industries that result in poverty, harm to workers and to humans and other creatures." Gandhi recognized that alienation and exploitation often occur when production and consumption are divorced from their social and cultural context, and that local enterprise is a way to avoid these problems. "*Swadeshi* is that spirit in us which requires us to serve our immediate neighbors before others, and to use things produced in our neighborhood in preference to those more remote. So doing, we serve humanity to the best of our capacity. We cannot serve humanity by neglecting our neighbors".

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Give the meaning and significance of *Swadeshi*.

....

....

....

2) What does Bal Gangadhar Tilak speak about British rule?.

....

....

....

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

2.6 EDUCATION AND UPLIFTMENT OF ALL

Why Gandhi proposed the introduction of productive handicrafts into the school system was not really as outrageous as may appear. What he really wanted was for the schools to be self-supporting, as far as possible. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, a poor society such as India simply could not afford to provide education for all children unless the schools could generate resources from within. Secondly, the more financially independent the schools were, the more politically independent they could be. What Gandhi wanted to avoid was dependence on the state which he felt would mean interference from the centre. Above all else, Gandhi valued self-sufficiency and autonomy. These were vital for his vision of an independent India made up of autonomous village communities to survive. It was the combination of *Swaraj* and *Swadeshi* related to the education system. A state system of education within an independent India would have been a complete contradiction as far as Gandhi was concerned (Burke 2000).

He was also of the opinion that manual work should not be seen as something inferior to mental work. He felt that the work of the craftsman or labourer should be the ideal model for the ‘good life’. Schools which were based around productive work where that work was for the benefit of all were, therefore, carrying out education of the whole person - mind, body and spirit. The right to autonomy that Gandhi’s educational plan assigns to the teacher in the context of the school’s daily curriculum is consistent with the libertarian principles that he shared with Tolstoy. Gandhi wanted to free the Indian teacher from interference from outside, particularly government or state bureaucracy. Under colonial rule, the teacher had a prescribed job to do that was based on what the authorities wanted the children to learn. Textbooks were mandatory so that Gandhi found that 'the living word of the teacher has very little value. A teacher who teaches from textbooks does not impart originality to his pupils. On the other hand, Gandhi’s vision implied the end of the teacher’s subservience to the prescribed textbook and the curriculum. It presented a concept of learning that simply could not be fully implemented with the help of textbooks. Of equal, if not more importance, was the freedom it gave the teacher in matters of curriculum. It denied the state the power to decide what teachers taught and what they did in the classroom. It gave autonomy to the teacher but it was, above all, a libertarian approach to schooling that transferred power from the state to the village (Burke 2000).

Gandhi’s basic education was, therefore, an embodiment of his perception of an ideal society consisting of small, self-reliant communities with his ideal citizen being an industrious, self-respecting and generous individual living in a small cooperative community. For informal educators, we can draw out a number of useful pointers. First, Gandhi’s insistence on autonomy and self-regulation is reflected in the ethos of informal education. Gandhi’s conception of basic education was concerned with learning that was generated within everyday life which is the basis on which informal educators work. It was also an education focused on the individual but reliant on co-operation between individuals. There is also a familiar picture of the relationships between educators and students/learners: “A teacher who establishes rapport with the taught, becomes one with them, learns more from them than he teaches them. He who learns nothing from his disciples is, in my opinion, worthless. Whenever I talk with someone I learn from him. I take from him more than I give him. In this way, a true teacher regards himself as a student of his students. If you will teach your pupils with this attitude, you will benefit much from them.” (Talk to Khadi Vidyalaya Students, Sevagram, Sevak, 15 February 1942 CW 75, p. 269 quoted in Burke 2000) Lastly, it was an education that aimed at educating the whole person, rather than concentrating on one aspect. It was a highly moral activity and a spiritual endeavour leading to full *Swaraj* and *Swadeshi*.

2.7 *SWARAJ* IN *SWADESHI*: IN GANDHI’S OWN WORDS

The following is taken from Young India, 10-12-1919 and is written by Gandhi himself. Though some of the historical events have become outdated, Gandhi’s eagerness for *Swaraj* and *Swadeshi* and his reasons are clearly evident in the passage given below. “The much-talked-of Reforms Bill will become the law of the land within a few days and in due course the new legislatures will take the place of the old. The Viceroy has announced that he is going loyally to abide by the new scheme and that he will try to make it a success. I have refrained from expressing an opinion on the report of the Joint Committee for I do not feel sufficiently interested in it. It is not possible to be enthused over .a thing which when analysed means little for the people. So far, therefore, as the Reform Scheme is concerned, I would simply urge that we should take the fullest advantage of it and, like the Viceroy, loyally work to make it a success. That it is an improvement upon the original measure is admitted by all.”

“But the real reform that India needs is *Swadeshi* in its true sense. The immediate problem before us is not how to run the government of the country, but how to feed and clothe ourselves. In 1918 we sent sixty crores of rupees out of India for buying cloth. If we continue to purchase foreign cloth at that rate, we deprive the Indian weaver and spinner of that amount from year to year without practically giving him or her any other work in exchange. No wonder a tenth at least of the population is cruelly half-starved and the majority of the rest underfed. He who has eyes may see for himself that the middle-class people are already being underfed and our babies are not getting enough milk for themselves. The Reform Scheme, no matter how liberal it is, will not help to solve the problem in the immediate future. But *Swadeshi-Gan* solve it now.”

“The Punjab has made the solution still clearer to me. God be thanked that the beautiful women of the Punjab have not yet lost the cunning of their fingers. High or low, they still know the art of spinning. They have not yet burnt their spinning-wheels as many Gujarati women have done. It is to me a perfect delight to find them throwing balls of yarn into my lap. They admit they have time at their disposal for spinning. They admit that the khaddar woven from their band-spun yarn is superior to the machine-spun yarn. Our forefathers were well able to clothe themselves with little effort and with perfect comfort without having to buy from the foreign markets.”

“This beautiful art and yet so simple is in danger of being lost if we do not wake up betimes. The Punjab gives proof of its possibilities. But the Punjab too is fast losing her hold of it. Every year witnesses a decrease in the output of band-spun yarn. It means greater poverty in our homes and greater idleness. The women who have ceased to spin are not utilizing their time in any other or better manner than gossiping.” “But one thing is needful to undo the mischief. If every educated Indian will realize his clear primary duty, he will straightway present the women of his household with a spinning-wheel and provide the facilities for learning the art of spinning. Millions of yards of yarn can be produced from day to day. And if every educated Indian will condescend to wear the cloth produced from such yarn, he will support and assist ill rebuilding the only possible cottage industry of India.” “Without a cottage industry the Indian doomed. He cannot maintain himself from the land. He needs a supplementary industry. Spinning is the easiest, the cheapest and the best.”

“I know this means a revolution in a mental outlook. And it is because it is a revolution that I can aim that the way to *Swaraj* lies through *Swadeshi*. A nation that can save sixty crores of rupees per year and distribute that large sum amongst its spinners and weavers in their own homes will have acquired powers of organization and industry that must enable it to do everything else necessary for its organic growth.” “The dreamy reformer whispers, "Wait till I get responsible government and I will protect India's industry, without our women having to spin and our weaver having to weave." This has been actually said by thinking men. I venture to suggest that there is a double fallacy underlying the proposition. India cannot wait for a protective tariff and protection will not reduce the cost of clothing. Secondly, mere protection will not benefit the starving millions. They can only be helped by being enabled to supplement their earnings by having a spinning industry restored to them. So whether we have a protective tariff or not, we shall still have to revive the hand-spinning industry and stimulate hand-weaving.”

“When the war was raging, all available hands in America and England were utilized in the naval yards for building ships and they- built them, too, at an amazing pace. If I Would have my way, I would make every available Indian learn spinning or weaving and make him or her do that work for a certain fixed portion of every day. I would start with schools and colleges presenting as they do ready-made organized units.” “Multiplication of mills cannot solve the problem. They will take too long to overtake the drain and they cannot distribute the sixty crores in our homes. They can only cause concentration of money and labour and thus make confusion worse confounded.”

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) How is *Swaraj* and *Swadeshi* related to the education system.

....

....

....

2) “Gandhi’s basic education was, therefore, an embodiment of his perception of an ideal society” Comment..

....

....

....

2.8 LET’S SUM UP

In this unit we saw the basic notions leading to *Swaraj* and *Swadeshi*. From a historical perspective, we have been able to see Gandhi’s ideal vision as the upliftment of all, including the villagers. Making the proud and giving them the dignity that is due is the basic principle of self-rule. Gandhi’s self-rule is the key to understanding India’s unique identity and destiny. It may be mentioned that though the cultural and economic situation in India today is very different, the basic insights of Gandhi is still valid. Unless we are proud of our own dignity and unless we have the right to determine our own destiny, we cease to be a nation.

2.9 KEYWORDS

Biocracy: Our current ideal of democracy, which is a form of tyranny of one generation of humans, has been a phase of our cultural evolution, and one that is now outdated, according to some thinkers. We need to move from a democracy to a biocracy. A process of decision making where the interest of nonhuman species, local and global ecosystems, and future generations are taken into account, because their interest is our interest.

Swaraj: self-government; independence

Swadeshi: A movement, part of the Indian independence movement, was a successful economic strategy to remove the British Empire from power and improve economic conditions in India through following principles of *Swadeshi* (self-sufficiency)

2.10 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

Burke, Barry. “Mahatma Gandhi on Education” http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-gand.htm, 2000.

Chadha, Y. *Rediscovering Gandhi*. London: Century, 1997.

Friends of India. 2007. *Swaraj* And *Swadeshi* http://blog.friendsofindia.net/2007_07_01_archive.html

Gandhi, M. K. *The Collected Works*. Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1977.

Gandhi, M. K. *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

Kumar, K. 'Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi' in Z. Morsy. Ed. *Thinkers on Education*. Volume 2. Paris: UNESCO, 1994.

SSS. “Sarvodaya, Swaraj, Swadeshi, Global Swadeshi,” http://global*Swadeshi*.ning.com/forum/topics/*Sarvodaya-Swaraj-Swadeshi*.

Wikipedia contributors. "Swadeshi movement." *Wikipedia*, The Free Encyclopedia. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 2 Apr. 2011. Web. 7 May. 2011.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

UNIT 3 SARVODAYA

Contents

3.1 Introduction
3.2 The meaning of *Sarvodaya*
3.3 The Philosophical Foundations of *Sarvodaya*
3.4 The Goals of *Sarvodaya*
3.5 The Main Features of *Sarvodaya*
3.6 Socio-political Philosophy of *Sarvodaya*
3.7 Political Implications of *Sarvodaya*
3.8 Socialism, Communism and *Sarvodaya*
3.9 Drawbacks of Gandhian *Sarvodaya*
3.10 Let Us Sum Up
3.11 Key Words
3.12 Further Readings and References

3.0 OBJECTIVES

Gandhian socio-political philosophy is impregnate with rich insights and novel ideas. The study is undertaken to have an in-depth analysis in the field of *Sarvodaya* movement. This unit would enable the students to understand the richness of Gandhian political thought, *Sarvodaya* or the welfare of all. It will enable one to have a wider vision on one's own role in the society and how one can contribute his or her share to the good of humanity. This study will also lead one to evaluate and compare the *Sarvodaya* ideals with other political ideals such as socialism and communism.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of *Sarvodaya* is a significant contribution of Mahatma Gandhi to the socio-political philosophy. His vision of *Sarvodaya* is not independent from the religions he came across, the persons with whom he came into contact, and the movements he has acquainted with. Though it is not easy to define properly Gandhi's vision of *Sarvodaya* it is an all-comprehensive vision assuring the total good of every individual: religious, moral, social, political, and economic. He used the word *Sarvodaya* to describe the principles that he felt should guide us in our efforts to build ourselves, our families, our communities and nations. He had arrived at these principles of a *Sarvodaya* society on the basis of his studies, his observations and his experiments with truth and non-violence. In the world threatened by poverty, unemployment, racial discrimination, exploitation, ecological destruction, war, and dehumanization, it was Gandhi's ardent desire to establish a new just society free from all social evils and which would ensure the good of all. He proposes *Sarvodaya* to achieve the integral development of every individual. It is an ideal to be translated into action in order to build up a new world society.

3.2 THE MEANING OF *SARVODAYA*

Sarvodaya is a Sanskrit word derived from two words, namely, *sarva* and *udaya*. Sarva means 'all' which includes every kind of living beings. *Udaya* means 'rise,' 'uplift,' 'prosperity,' 'affluence,' etc. So *Sarvodaya* literally means 'the welfare of all' or 'the upliftment of all.' The ultimate objective of *Sarvodaya* is the total well-being of all or the greatest good of all. By 'welfare of all' Gandhi means the sum total of conditions – religious, moral, political, social and economic – for the all round growth of the total individual and of every individual in the context of the overall development of society. By the concept *Sarvodaya* Gandhi really means universal uplift or the welfare of all men and women and not just the welfare, or greatest happiness, of the greatest number. *Sarvodaya* is the name Gandhi gives to the new society embracing the betterment of the entire humankind and the world at large. It is a society directed towards the integral welfare of all living beings based on age and on the old spiritual and moral values of Indian and those found elsewhere.

3.3 THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF *SARVODAYA*

The socio-political philosophy of Gandhi may be termed *Sarvodaya*. It may, however, be noted that Gandhi was not the author of the idea of *Sarvodaya*. He borrowed the idea as well as the term from Ruskin. Ruskin himself had borrowed it from the *Bible*. Gandhi first used the word *Sarvodaya* in a booklet which he published in his native Gujarati after he read John Ruskin. The essay, *Unto This Last*, was based on a parable from the Gospel according to Matthew 20:1-16 concerning the owner of a plantation and his hiring of labourers to work in his vineyard. In his parable Jesus make the master of the vineyard declare: "I will give unto this last even as I give unto thee." The emphasis of Ruskin's essay, as interpreted by Gandhi, is certainly that ideal society is none in which there is concern for the welfare of all. This is the foundation for his *Sarvodaya* movement. Along with *Unto This Last* Tolstoy's *Bread Labour* also influenced Gandhi. However, the credit of Gandhi lies in the fact that he devoted his entire life to the creation of a new society, a society based on the principles of *Sarvodaya*.

Gandhi summed up the teachings of Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, which he called *Sarvodaya*, in the following three fundamental principles:

(a) That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.

(b) That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.

(c) That a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is life worth living.

The concept of the 'welfare of all' has been the fundamental fact in the Indian religious consciousness from time immemorial and he only embodied it more fully and more clearly than before in the light of his life experience in the West. Thousands of years ago the *rishis* in India preached the welfare of all beings as god, human beings and nature constitute one organic whole. Hindu *dharma* or morality teaches that the individual has certain social and moral duties towards the other members of the community depending on his or her caste and the stage of life. *Sarvodaya* traces its theoretical roots in the Vedic and Vedantic teaching that from a higher standpoint all living beings are participants in a super-material reality. Ahimsa is exhorted by the Upanishads as an important spiritual and moral value for breaking the law of karma and thus bringing about the final liberation. The spirit of *ahimsa*, i.e., to love all animate and inanimate beings and to work for the well-being of every being is found in Bhagavad Gita's teaching on *lokasamgraha* (well-being of the world) and *sarva bhutahite ratah* (those who delight in well-being of all beings).

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Write a brief note on the etymological origin of *Sarvodaya*.

…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………

2) What are the three fundamental principles of *Sarvodaya*?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………

3.4 THE GOALS OF *SARVODAYA*

The fundamental goal of *Sarvodaya* is the greatest good of all living beings. Gandhi aims at the transformation of society in which everybody contributes his or her own maximum share for the peace and harmony of the world. As a consequence the integral growth which includes spiritual, moral, political, social and economic welfare of every individual and the welfare of all is visualized. It also aims at the all-round development of all, without distinction of caste, creed, sex or religion. Gandhi wanted to establish a welfare state in India, which he called *Ram Rajya*. When each individual including the sick and the invalid fulfills his or her duties according to his or her capacity, there will be a healthy community assuring the integral welfare of all beings. By providing sufficient opportunities to every individual for their personal initiatives and capacities *Sarvodaya* aims at the total and integral development of every individual in human society.

Gandhi was not the supporter of utilitarianism which aims at the greatest happiness to the greatest number. *Sarvodaya* aims at the integral liberation of every individual. It also stands for the well-being of the whole individual, body and soul. The goal of *Sarvodaya* is not the suppression or liquidation of an individual or a group but the triumph of truth which means the victory of the oppressor and the oppressed, the exploiter and the exploited. It is not the victory of an individual over another individual or even a group over other. The main principle behind it is that the good of the individual is contained in the good of all. Gandhi's liberated society defends and stands for the rights and the dignity of every human person. While rejecting the principle of the greatest good of the greatest number, it upholds the maximum welfare of every individual on the basis of sharing goods and services regardless of one's own contribution. The resources and the progress of the village should be accessible to every individual. No individual or a group will be left out or suppressed in the *Sarvodaya* society.

The philosophy of *Sarvodaya*, based on the insights and experiences of Gandhi, is a reassertion of his commitment to the problems of mankind in the direction of establishing a new social, political, economic and moral order. Vinoba Bhave, an ardent disciple of Gandhi, rightly says, "*Sarvodaya* stands for not only making all happy by eliminating suffering from all but also for bringing a world state based on equality" For Gandhi, *Sarvodaya* as a broader concept stands for the merger of one in all with self-sacrifice and a selfless service. His *Sarvodaya* ideal, apart from standing for the meaning of the welfare of all, implies the meaning of the universal welfare and integrated development of all. The greatest contribution of *Sarvodaya* in this century lies in the reassertion of the Gandhian moral approach to the problems of humanity.

Through *Sarvodaya*, Gandhi strives for the establishment of a new, moral, just, non-violent, non-exploitative, non-materialist, non-imperialist, non-racist, non-consumerist, egalitarian, liberated, humane and de-centralised socio-politico-economic order which aims at the integrate welfare of the whole person everywhere. To achieve the welfare of all, the benefits of the nations' progress and prosperity must reach down unto the least and the lowest of the society. The natural and available resources of the world are to be for the total well-being of all human beings for their proper fulfilment as human persons. *Sarvodaya* aims at the realisation of global welfare and, consequently, a universal brotherhood and friendship in the place of a corrupt and unjust world where only a few enjoy the fruits of the world.

The goal of *Sarvodaya* includes ultimately the self-realization of every individual. Total self-realization, according to Gandhi, is the god-realization. It is to be achieved through the inner conversion of the individual and a life based on the twin principles of truth and non-violence, within the family, the village, the province, the nation and the world as a whole. It embraces all humanity and all spheres of life. The liberation of one and all, including even the animal and plant life, is aimed at. The entire world is seen as an organism.

3.5 THE MAIN FEATURES OF *SARVODAYA*

The main features of *Sarvodaya* are trusteeship, economic equality and networking.

Trusteeship

The theory of trusteeship, elimination of exploitation in every shape or form; a classless society which offers no privileges by the birth or wealth or talent; mutual cooperation being the driving force of motivation and behaviour; and above all, securing the welfare of all without any distinction of race, religion, sex, political affiliation: these may be said to be the highlights of the *Sarvodaya* society envisioned by the Mahatma. *Sarvodaya* is the application of the principle of non-violence in the transformation of societies: from their present forms which are mostly exploitative of and unfavourable to the disadvantaged, toward more balanced, inclusive and egalitarian forms in which can be enshrined the principle of social justice for all.

Economic equality

According to Gandhi economic equality is the master key to non-violent transformationary independence. Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour. A non-violent system of government is clearly and impossibly so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists. The most disadvantaged sections of the community being the economically, the physically and the mentally poor, it is obvious that no egalitarian society could evolve without the poor taking part in the evolutionary process. And for this sector to take part, focus must be put on raising their status to an acceptably decent level. However, as it should be for all the other sectors of society, if an acceptable level of existence is to be reached and maintained for the disadvantaged sector, it is imperative that it should be self-sustainable through their participation in their own management.

Sarvodaya Network

During his lifetime, Gandhi never allowed *Sarvodaya* organisations to be formally instituted. His thinking was that once you served people, as '*sevakas*,' within the *Sarvodaya* philosophy there was no need for institutionalization. But since his demise *Sarvodaya* organisations have been established world-wide genuinely helping people towards building new societies from the 'grass-roots' up. At the operational field level, the most successful *Sarvodaya* programmes have most often been those which, apart from being self-created and self-managed, have employed practical hands-on-learning-by-doing methods, including a lot of income generation, skills training and conscientisation; rather than the theoretical 'talk-shop' or workshop approach.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) How is *Sarvodaya* different from utilitarianism?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………

2) The goal of *Sarvodaya* includes self-realization. Explain.

…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

3) *Sarvodaya* network is an important feature of Sarvodaya movement. How?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………

3.6 SOCIO-POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF *SARVODAYA*

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

Gandhian concept of *Sarvodaya* is both social and political in nature. It is not easy to distinguish both. For Gandhi politics was a means to social change and social transformation. Therefore, all his political agendas, principles and movements were social in nature. The main pillars of Gandhian political philosophy are philosophical anarchism, partyless democracy and decentralization. Let us see them in detail.

Philosophical Anarchism

In political struggles we find the causal role of ruthless competition for power and dominance. In such dangerous games of politics we can discover at the action of the fundamental urge for domination over others and the working of an elementary rule that if one person renounces the attempt for obtaining power, others will begin to dominate over him. *Sarvodaya* accepts the sacrosanct character of the human spirit. Hence, it is emphatic on the inculcation of the values of freedom, equality, justice and fraternity. Thus, it is opposed to the state machine. In most cases the state operates by methods of intimidation, coercion, persecution and organized violence. Gandhi wanted that *swarjaya* should be based on the moral sovereignty of the people.

Partyless Democracy

The activities and operations of the political parties in modern states become mainly oriented to the ruthless pursuit of power. Even in democracies, in spite of the theoretical adherence to the principles of the basis of government, in actual practice, there is the domination of the all-powerful parties. Consequently, there are no occasions for the continuous dynamic political initiative of the masses and for the sovereign exercise of that general will of the community conceived. *Sarvodaya* is definitely hostile to the mechanism of representative democracy which amounts in actual practice to the dictatorship of the cabinet and the party oligarchy. Hence *Sarvodaya* advocates partyless democracy.

Decentralization (*Ramarajaya*)

In place of the ever-growing centralization of power *Sarvodaya* pleads for decentralization. Gandhi was hostile to all types of concentration of power and he pleaded for decentralization at the economic and political levels. What is essential is that the people should be trained and disciplined into the management and control of their own affairs. These workers should behave as the brethren of the people and not their rulers and educate the people through tier co-operative solicitude. The advocates of *Sarvodaya* are quite correct in holding that if genuine self-government or real democracy is practised at the village level, then that would be the greatest bulwark against any totalitarian encroachment. *Sarvodaya* accepts the universalization of self-government. This means the activization of the people for vigilant and active participation in co-operative action. If the officials at the top are liable to perversity and corruption, it is equally essential to guard effectively against the corruption of the workers and petty officials at the level of the villages. *Sarvodaya* wants to elevate the people. Hence the people and not the central parliament of cabinet have to become the focus of political attention.

3.7 POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF *SARVODAYA*

The fundamental theme of *Sarvodaya* is the realization of the happiness and elevation of all. At the political level it has two implications: the repudiation of the theory of class struggle and the safeguarding of the interests and rights of the minority.

The repudiation of the theory of class struggle

Sarvodaya attacks the repugnant and perverse consequences of egoism and the lust for power and wealth. Hence, it stresses the necessity of the disinterested service. Service, dedication and the realization of common good are its techniques and formulas and it is opposed to the Marxist theory of class struggle, which favours utilization of violence. *Sarvodaya* pleads for the replacement of the concept of class struggle by the more rational and organic theory of social good and harmony. The aim is not the forcible expropriation of the wealth of the rich but the conscious and spontaneous practice of 'sharing' the goods one has ready at hand. In this way there can be an overpowering accentuation of the ideal of sharing and almost a mass moral revolution oriented to the effectuation of a peaceful social reconstruction can be brought about. *Sarvodaya* contemplates not the retention of the system of exploitation and coercion but it wants to bring about a regime of absolute social equality and the maximum of economic equality too. *Sarvodaya* contemplates a regime of liberty, equality and justice to be brought about by the dynamic transforming power of love and non-violence.

The Repudiation of the Concept of Majoritarianism

The second implication from the *sarvodayist* conception of the organic reality of the community is the repudiation of the element of superior virtue supposed to be contained in the judgement of a majority of heads. If the community is an organic structure and if all the individual members of it are bearers of moral and cultural values then there is no place for jeopardizing the lives and interests of even the lowest and humblest. But if truth is the supreme canon and if the opinion, wish and aspiration of every member is precious, then in that case one has to work by consensus and not by majority. Hence, according to *Sarvodaya* the concept of majoritarianism has to be replaced by the concept of consensus. *Sarvodaya* is not satisfied with the various safeguards of proportional representation that have been devised to protect the interests of the minority. It adheres, rather, to the Gandhian concept that the superficial numerical criteria of many and few have to be replaced by a fundamental adherence to the good of the community. Thus, *Sarvodaya* aims to replace the concept of majoritarinism by the concept of fundamental consensus.

3.8 SOCIALISM, COMMUNISM AND *SARVODAYA*

Sarvodaya and socialism

Sarvodaya is closely related to socialism in some respect. First of all, both derived their profound moral appeal from their rootedness in the fundamental belief in the good of the whole community in place of the narrow pursuit of the interests of the oligarchical minority of plutocrats. Secondly, both stress that there should be a social appropriation and equitable distribution of the goods of society. But in spite of the some fundamental similarities between socialism and *Sarvodaya*, there is great difference between them on the question of means and methods. The *Sarvodaya* concept has also specified that for achieving good ends we should adopt only good means. The good means here represent the path of love, truth and non-violence. The *Sarvodaya* workers and all those who have faith in the concept of *Sarvodaya*, should have clarity about their goal and should ensure the purity of means. One has to be vigilant about the ends and means. From the standpoint of *Sarvodaya* there are two shortcomings in the socialist philosophy. First, the basic technic for effectuating socialism is supposed to be nationalization whereas *Sarvodaya* holds villagism. Secondly, socialism adheres, at least in some cases, to the concept of violent revolution.

Communism and *Sarvodaya*

Sarvodaya is more or less different from communism in its approach and methods. The difference between *Sarvodaya* and communism is far more basic and fundamental. Communism in Russia is a totalitarian system wedded to the cult of regimentation, violence and party dictatorship. Its all-pervasive aim has been the transformation of a backward feudal agrarian economy into a modern industrial-collectivist economy and this immense transformation has been sought to be achieved by the revival, in more intensified forms. *Sarvodaya*, on the contrary, believes in persuasion and change of heart. Gandhi has taught the ethics of self-suffering to convert the opponent because violence can never be the foundation of a just and equal society. A society of liberty and equality cannot be built by the capture of state power by a monolithic totalitarian party. *Sarvodaya*, hence, is intensely and trenchantly critical of the methods and techincs of Russian communism.

3.9 DRAWBACKS OF GANDHIAN *SARVODAYA*

Sarvodaya is a concept which is rich in insight and ideology. However, many consider it as utopian as many of the things are not very easy to put into practice. *Sarvodaya* emphatically pleads for small communities. But it has some practical difficulties in the modern civilization. For instance, if we want the country to be strong and able to protest itself against the deprivation of the neighbours, we have to industrialize. The pace of industrialization will be determined by the competitive march of other powers in the race of industrial and military supremacy. Also it is true that the growth of factionalism and partisanship is one of the greatest evils of democracy. But it does not seem possible to abolish parties. It is good to abolish partisanship and not parties.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) How does decentralization replaces the totalitarianism?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………

2) Why do we say that *Sarvodaya* ideals are more profound than socialist ideals?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………

3.10 LET US SUM UP

The philosophy of *Sarvodaya* is integral and synthetic in character. The synthetic approach is of great merit in political philosophy. For instance, Plato built his philosophy by the synthesis of the ideas of Parmenides, Socrates and Pythagoras. The philosophy of *Sarvodaya* is based on the mystical intuitions and socio-political experiences of Gandhi. He attempted the synthesis of the ideas of Vedanta, Buddhism, Tulsidas, Christianity, Ruskin, Tolstoy, Thoreau, etc. He tried to incorporate some ideas from the Western philosophy as well. The political philosophy of

Sarvodaya is an intellectual attempt to build a plan of political and social construction on the basis of metaphysical idealism. It is based on the insights of Gandhi in the framework of independent India. The synthesis of partyless democracy and village self-government is a notable contribution from the standpoint of Indian political thought and practice. The villagism of *Sarvodaya* may appear as a reaction against the modern industrial trends of civilization, but it has added the new radical gospels of the ownership of all land of the village by the village community itself and the formation of a decentralized village commonwealth.

3.11 KEY WORDS

***Sarvodaya*:** Universal uplift, welfare of all or progress of all.

***Swarajya*:** It generally means self-governance or self-rule. The word usually refers to Gandhi's concept for Indian independence from foreign domination.

Institutionalization: Making something to become part of an organized system, society or culture, so that it is considered normal.

Decentralization: Giving some of the power of a central government, organization, etc. to smaller parts or organizations around the country.

Universalization: Making something universal in use or distribution, often within a particular field.

Majoritarianism: It is a traditional political philosophy or agenda which asserts that a majority of the population is entitled to a certain degree of primacy in society, and has the right to make decisions that affect the society.

3.12 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

Devadoss, T. S. *Sarvodaya and the Problem of Political Sovereignty*. Madras: University of Madras, 1974.

Kavungal, Devis. *The Philosophical Foundation of Mahatma Gandhi's Vision of Sarvodaya.* Dharamaram Publications and Ruhalaya Publication: Banglore, 2000.

Mishra, R.P. *Gandhism after Gandhi.* New Delhi: Mittal Press, 1999.

Narayanasamy S. *The Sarvodaya Movement: Gandhian Approach to Peace and Non-Violence.* New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2003.

Pandikattu, Kuruvilla. Ed. *The Meaning of the Mahatma for the Millennium*. Delhi: Maadhyam Book Services, 2000.

Varma, Vishwanath Prasad. *Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi and Sarvodaya*. Agra: Lakshmi Narain Agrawal, 1965.

UNIT 4 CASTE AND SOCIAL ORDER

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

Contents

4.0 Objectives

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Caste System in India

4.3 *Varna* System

4.4 Gandhian Social Thought

4.5 Gandhi's Concept of *Varna* System

4.6 Gandhi's Views on Caste System and Untouchability

4.7 Let Us Sum Up

4.8 Key Words

4.9 Further Readings and References

4.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the unit is to give a history of caste system. The history of caste system is dealt in brief and traced to the caste system in Indian society. The place of it in the social order of India is also given in this unit. Finally the views of Mahatma Gandhi on caste system and untouchability are paid due attention. Thus by the end to this unit you will able to have brief idea of the history of caste system; to know about its origins in the Indian history; to have a basic understanding about its role in Indian social order; and to understand about the views of Gandhiji on caste system and untouchability.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The word 'caste' is derived from the Portuguese and Spanish word '*casta'* meaning 'race', breed or lineage. According to the Britannica Encyclopedia, it means a group of people having a specific social rank, defined generally by descent, marriage and occupation. Each caste has its own customs that restrict the occupations and dietary habits of its members and their social contact with members of other castes. Anthropologists use the term more generally, to a social group that is endogamous and occupationally specialized. Caste systems are traditional hereditary systems of social stratification enforced by common practice and based on classification such as occupation, race, ethnicity etc. In its broadest sense, examples of caste based societies were found in Latin America under Spanish and Portuguese rule apart from India.

Systems similar to caste are said to exist in other parts of the world such as Japan, Indo-China, Indonesia and in countries situated to the north of India like Afghanistan and Baluchistan. They do not completely resemble caste but they have some resemblance of the caste system. A caste system is one whereby a society is divided into a number of self-contained and completely segregated units or castes, and the mutual relationship between them are determined ritually in a graded scale. The caste system in its most developed form is found in India. In this unit we are dealing mainly with the place of caste system in the social order of India and Gandhiji's views on it.

4.2 CASTE SYSTEM IN INDIA

Caste is a fundamental institution of Indian society. It pervades the entire gamut of Indian social organization and there is hardly any aspect of Indian society which is not influenced by caste. India has to contend with a vast array and variety of problems inherent in the social fabric. The caste system has had profound and far reaching effects on the very ethos, culture, and character of the society at large in the country. Caste, in one form or the other, in a rudimentary or highly developed form, has always been associated with Indian society. The relation between caste and Indian society has been so long and so intimate that many have viewed caste and Indian society as coeval. The features of caste prevailing through the past centuries may be described under nine heads: hierarchy, endogamy and hypergamy; occupational association; restriction on food; drink and smoking; distinction in custom, dress and speech; pollution; ritual and other privileges and disabilities; caste organization and caste mobility.

A number of theories about the origin of caste have been given by Indologists and other social scientists. But no one has so far succeeded in giving a satisfactory theory of the origin of caste. The very dynamic nature of caste seems to elude all efforts to theories or generalize about the system. Some researchers believe that the caste system began with the Indo-Aryan migration to India. However, the theory of Indo-Aryan migration itself is a highly disputed topic.

Although many Hindu scriptures contain passages that can be interpreted to sanction the caste system, they also contain indications that the caste system is not an essential part of Hindu religion. The Vedas place very little importance on the caste system. Later scriptures such as *Bhagavad Gita* and *Manu Smrti* state that the four *varnas* are created by God. The traditional theory believes that the caste system has been established by divine ordinance or at least with divine approval. This theory views caste system as a normal and natural system. On the other hand, the sociological theory regards caste system as a man-made or artificially created and an ascriptive system of stratification in which status and role are determined by birth.

The traditional view has two versions: Mythical and metaphysical. The metaphysical version explains the fixed function, hierarchy and other characteristics of caste. Each caste has a separate function and this function is determined by the nature and qualities of the caste members. The mythical version regards four castes have emerged from different parts of *Brahman's* body, *Brahma*, the lord of creation, created human beings from different limbs; the *Brahmanas* from his mouth, and so they were to be the intellectuals. Hence they were assigned the highest position in society and their occupation was priesthood. The *Kshatriyas* sprung from the arm of Brahma and were given the second position in society, that of warriors signified by the use of arms. The *Vaishyas* were given the third position and they were believed to be created from the thigh of *Brahma*. They became traders by occupation. *Shudras* who sprung from *Brhama's* feet were manual workers and they occupied the fourth position in society.

4.3 VARNA SYSTEM

The Sanskrit term *varna* is derived from the root '*vri*' which means choice or to choose. This is contrary to the assumption that '*varna*' denotes color and hence signifies qualities of some one. In the context of social hierarchies, it means social arrangement. At later stages the word '*varna*' came to be used for the four social classes i.e. *Brahmana* (scholarly community), *Kshartiya* (warriors or political community), *Vaishya* (mercantile community) and *Shudra* (service providing community).There was nothing like higher or lower *varna* in the Vedic period. The divisions of society into four varnas or four orders were based on the division of labour. *Brahman* acted as priest, *Kshatriyas* as rulers and fighters, *Vaishyas* as traders and *shudras* as service class. Each *varna* worshipped different deities and followed different rituals. This difference was because each group had to achieve different object according to its occupational role. Brahmins wanted maximum holy luster for which they worshipped *agni* (fire) and recited *gayatri* mantras. *Kshtriyas* wanted physical strength for which they worshipped *Indra* and recited *Trishubh* mantras. *Vaishyas* wanted cattle wealth for which they worshipped *Visvedevas* and recited *Jagati* mantras. But there were no restrictions on the matrimonial alliances or social relations or even on the change of membership from one *varna* to another.

The aim of the four fold *varna* system in India was division of labour. The theory of division of labour is one of the fundamental theories of social organization. It propounds that for an orderly progress of work in society, it is necessary that it be divided into classes according to natural tendencies. Thus the responsibility of *Brahmanas* was to see the proper execution of works like study of knowledge and teaching and other religious activities. The government, defense and direction of the state were left to the *Kshatriyas* while the *Vaishyas* carried on the agriculture, diary farming and business. The *Shudras* served the other three *varnas*.

The *varna* system is a developed social system. Social stratification is found in all societies but it is difficult to find one as systematic as the Indian *varna* system. The object of this system was to put the different powers of man to proper and productive uses in order to maintain the solid, organized and balanced state of society. Another major advantage of the *varna* system was the decentralization of power. Concentration of all power in the hands of one class may lead to exploitation and despotism. In the *varna* system, the power of knowledge, power of arms, power of wealth and power of labour were evenly distributed among the *Brahmanas*, the *Kshatriyas*, the *Vaishyas* and the *Shudras* respectively. By keeping respect, authority and wealth separate, the *varna* system saved the society from the defects of concentration or localization of power.

In this way the *varna* system shows a fine synthesis of the fundamentals of social organization, division of labour and decentralization. This convention was not severe and was based on inherent qualities and tendencies. Here we see the technical skill of the occupation was passed on hereditarily from generation to generation and because of practicing the same occupation over a long period of time 'occupational guilds' came into existence which later on came to be known as castes. But at a later stage, when it became the caste system we see a rigid form which lost all its good qualities. The caste system which is said to be originated from the *varna* system, is very different from it. It lost the advantages of the *varna* system and became detrimental to the society. Thus we see that though the caste system was originally evolved for the necessary classification of human duty in order to preserve the organic stability of society, its original meaning and intention were forgotten through the passage of time. It is necessary for every one to have consideration for the facts of world unity and goodwill. Humanity demands love for all, justice; fair treatment and help to the needy and this should form the basis of society. Here we see the relevance of Gandhian social thought which India needs today because he aimed not only the uplift of this or that particular class or caste but the welfare of all or *sarvodaya*, as he called it.

4.4 GANDHIAN SOCIAL THOUGHT

With the message of love, tolerance and service of mankind, Mahatma Gandhi successfully infused a new hope in man, both in India and abroad. As one of the builders of modern India, his contribution is second to none in the spiritual and political regeneration of India. His broad and humanistic outlook towards the problems of life will always remain an ideal to be followed not only by Indians, but humanity in general.

Before making an attempt to outline the social thought of Gandhi, we should bear in our mind that Gandhiji was a 'Practical Idealist'. He did not want to find out the basis of social organization or wanted to evolve a theory of state. Instead, he wanted to find out a way through which such a system of social organization could become a healthier system. According to him, the origin of society lies in man's realization that complete selfishness has no place in life. The formation of society was also to avoid violence. Thus Gandhiji was able to prove that the basis of society consists in Non-violence and Self-sacrifice. If the very origin of society lies in self-sacrifice, then there has to be a harmony between personal consideration and the good of the society. In the society he has to care for his food and shelter and for that he has to work in co-operation with others. This 'work' relates every man with every other man of society. Work thus becomes the basis of social organization.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your Answers.

1) What are the two versions of the traditional view of the origin of caste system in India?

----

2) How did Gandhiji defined *varna* system?

----

3) How is caste system different from *varna vyavastha* according to Gandhi?

4.5 GANDHI’S CONCEPT OF VARNA SYSTEM

Gandhi believed that there should be an inner arrangement in a society for enabling every member to do his share of work for the betterment of the society. He held that the ancient classification of Hindu society into four *varnas* has been made in that spirit. Thus Gandhian concept of the relation between the society and the individual is based upon the ancient Indian *varna* system. In the *varna* system different individuals were classified according to their innate tendencies and were given social roles corresponding to them. This according to Gandhi created conditions both for individual development and social system. He believed that every man was born with some definite limitations which he cannot overcome. The law of *varna* system according to Gandhi was deduced from a careful observation of these limitations. It established certain sphere of action for certain people with certain tendencies. This will help to avoid all unworthy and unnecessary competition. Gandhi finds this system to be advantageous in many ways. It is advantageous economically because it involves division of labour. It ensures hereditary skills. It has all advantages of trade unions and above all it reduces the possibility of individual poverty or pauperism to the minimum. Gandhiji’s appreciation of *varna* system was based on his faith in *Bhagavad Gita* because Lord Krishna said in it that the ‘four-fold system (*Chathurvarnya*) was created by me according to the division of qualities (*gunas*) and functions (*Karmas*). Here it is clear that *varna* does not mean that somebody is born high and some low, *varna* does not give superiority to any body simply by birth. The original *varna*-distinctions were based not on the distinctions of high and low, but on the capacities, skill and power inherent in an individual, and also on the principle of 'division of work'.

In the opinion of Gandhi according to *varna* system, an individual was a *brahmin* not because he was born a *brahmin*, but because he was brought up in an atmosphere that enabled him to perform the duties of a *brahmin*. Similarly, *Kshatriyas* or *Vaisyas* or *Sudras* were known by their respective names on account of the specific duties that they used to prefer. It was quite possible for a *sudra* to change his *varna* by successfully performing the duties of a different *varna*. More over, only because one *varna* performs a kind of duty, which, from a superficial point of view, appears to be a better kind of duty than the duties of another *varna*, the former does not become superior to the latter. All kinds of work are important and equally essential for the society, and therefore, all kinds of work are equal.

According to Gandhi *varna* means pre-determination of the choice of man's profession. The law of *varna* is that a man shall follow the profession of his ancestors for earning is livelihood. Every child naturally chooses his father's profession. *Varna* therefore is in a way that law of heredity. It is not a human invention but an immutable law of nature - the statement of a tendency that is ever present and at work. Gandhi made it clear that *varna* prescribes duties and obligations only. The performance of hereditary functions merely means that the kind of duty that he has to perform in the society has already been settled. This factor of heredity avoids the possibility of rift and strife ensuing from making fresh distribution of work everyday. Here Gandhi was asserting that in order to become a Brahmin it is necessary for a person to reveal the attributes of *brahmin*. Otherwise he ceases to be so. Because of this, Gandhi always related the doctrine of *varna* to that of *ashrama dharma*. The four fold divisions of class are added to the four fold divisions of the life of an individual. The four *ashramas* are *Brahmacarya, Grhastha, Vanaprastha* and *Sanyasa*. The ashram system is a means of systematic development for the better life. Thus *ashrama* dharma was the basis of *vedic* social organization. The notion of *dharma* was emphasized very much. *Dharma* here stands for duties. According to Gandhi every *varna* had specific and definite duties or *dharmas* attached to it. He believed that if these divisions are understood properly and their implications are fully realized, then a strong and moral society can be built on their basis.

As the champion of *varnashramadharma* Gandhi fought against the arrogant assumption of superiority of one *varna* over another. The very question of superiority or inferiority demonstrates the weakness of human nature. *Varnashrama*, on the other hand, is based on the rocky foundation of the recognition of the essential identity and oneness of all that lives. It excludes the very idea of superiority and it stands for the ideal of service to all in the society. It is through service, according to Gandhi, persons occupy their positions in their respective *varnas*. To him, no *varna* stands for inequality. He views all *varnas* as equal because the community depends on all of them in one way or another.

4.6 GANDHI'S VIEWS ON CASTE SYSTEM AND UNTOUCHABILITY

Gandhi did not think that caste system is a necessary corollary of *varna* system. He believed that caste system has been a blot on Hinduism and it has robbed the Hindu religion of its vitality and brilliance. He held that caste system is a degraded form of the original *varna* system as it has distorted the very spirit of *varna*. He said "*varnas* and *ashramas* are institutions which have nothing to do with castes. The law of *varna* teaches us that each one of us have to earn our bread by following the ancestral calling. It defines not our rights but our duties". Gandhi felt that the caste system with the existing innumerable divisions and with the artificial divisions imposed upon it is the very antithesis of *varnashrama*. Gandhi made a distinction between *varna* and caste. Caste is determined at birth whereas *varna* is acquired by a person according to his nature. Thus caste is based upon birth while *varna* is in action. The idea of *varna* mainly lays emphasis on the ethical and intellectual capabilities of man. In the caste system special importance is given to birth rights and respect enjoyed on this account. Again, whereas the *varna* system was flexible the caste system is a rigid one and while the number of *varnas* were only four, the number of castes are many. Caste is an excrescence upon *varna*. It is a weedy growth fit only to be weeded out. He held that there is nothing in common between caste and *varna*, because while *varna* gives life, caste kills it. He also added that caste is a man-made institution and it has to go. It has no religious basis also. He was of opinion that Hindu society was full of chaos and confusion because of the wrong interpretation of *varna*. The *varna* of today means the gradations of high and low and it is a hideous travesty of the original. *Varna* has nothing to do with caste. Caste is an excrescence, just like untouchability upon Hinduism. It is this travesty of *varna* that has degraded Hinduism and India. Our failure to follow the law of *varna* is largely responsible for both our economic and spiritual ruin. It is one cause of unemployment and it is responsible for untouchability and defection from our faith. While defending *varnashrma* as a rational scientific fact, Gandhi criticizes untouchability as an immitigable evil.

Varna, according to Gandhi, does not admit the superiority or the inferiority of any *varna* over any other. So Gandhi held that *varna* system was against untouchability. Equality demanded that we should not distinguish among human beings on the basis of social occupation. Therefore, Gandhi through out his life waged a war against the evil of untouchability. By attacking untouchability, he was attacking both untouchability and the caste system. This was Jawaharlal Nehru's understanding of Gandhi's strategy. Elimination of untouchability was an important aspect of his programme. As equality of all men was the fundamental principle of Gandhian thought, he considered it has his duty to uplift the untouchables and eradicate untouchability from the society. According to him, treating some as untouchables or inferiors is nothing but the abuse of *varnashrama*, which never entertains the feeling of superiority of inferiority. Viewing one as high or low is the weakness of human nature, and it reveals a person's unmanly nature. *Varnashrama* compels everyone to bow down his head in all humility before knowledge, before purity, before every person where God is seen face to face. The difference between *varna* system and untouchability is not of degree, but of kind. The basis of Gandhiji's religion was love and truth and he wanted to create a social order free from class and case distinction. He considered untouchability as a crime on the basis of these principles and so he wanted to eradicate it.

Mahatma Gandhi held that by enforcing laws, one cannot remove untouchability. This can be removed only through the purification of one's own heart. He wanted every individual to be inwardly transformed in order to bring about a true equality. Untouchability could be removed only if the people responsible for perpetrating it wanted to do away with it. Because Gandhi views that every fight against untouchability is a religious fight, it can be gradually removed when the majority of Hindus realize that it is a heinous crime against God and man. Inter dining or an inter-caste marriage does not help the removal of untouchability. That is why he appealed to the hearts of every social reformer to take bold steps to allow the untouchables to enter temples. Side by side, he induced government of the state to legalize temple entry. He even suggested to the highly placed Hindus to adopt children of the untouchables as their own.

In order to tackle the problem of untouchability properly, Gandhiji went to the root of it. The root lies in the holy books like the Vedas and the *shastras*. He could not rewrite them and not improve them. So he interpreted the holy books in his way and made its his life's mission for the upliftment of untouchables. The Gandhian approach to the problem was simple and optimistic. He wanted truthful and non-violent means to be followed in this case also as in the pursuit of other ends of life.

Again, no *swaraj* is possible without the removal of untouchability. True democracy lies in the revival of *svadharma*, which means fulfillment of the duties that naturally come one's way. The members of the *ashrama* carried out their various responsibilities from a sense of duty, regardless of their original caste backgrounds. We are all born to only fulfill that dharma. It brings material well being to society and spiritual freedom to individual. Thus fulfilling *svadharma* alone is conducive to bring *sarvodaya* or welfare of all.

Gandhi's concept of *Ramarajya* stands for an egalitarian and non-violent democratic social order wherein moral values pervade all spheres of human life. Politically, it is a form of stateless society. Socially, it is a form of classless society where all persons are equally treated irrespective of caste, color, religion, sex and so on. Economically, it is a form of socialist society in which inequalities based on possession and non-possession vanish because all wealth belongs to the society as a whole. Thus, Gandhi suggested a one caste society as the solution to the caste system. He held that civic nationalism should replace casteism.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your Answers.

1) What are the reasons that made Gandhiji to fight against untouchability?

----

2) Describe in detail the features of *varna ashrama dharma*.

4.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we are giving a brief idea of the caste system in India in the introduction. Caste system in India with emphasis on *varna* system is dealt in detail as it forms the origin of the system in Hindu society. This is followed by an analysis of Gandhian social thought and his views on *varna* system. We see that he defended *varna* system very much but was against the then existing caste system of India which is a perverted form of *varna* system. This also made him to fight against untouchability which was prevalent in Indian society during that time. It is concluded by giving a brief idea of Gandhi's idea of one caste society which he suggested as a solution to the evils of caste system system and how he incorporated this idea in his concepts of *Ramarajya*, *Sarvodaya* etc.

4.8 KEY WORDS

Excrescence	:	an unnecessary or unattractive addition
Mythical	:	that which is legendary
Metaphysical	:	of or relating to metaphysics/supernatural
Anthropologist	:	a scientist who studies about the origin, and development- Of human race
Ethnic	:	a group sharing a common origin, culture or language
Hierarchy	:	a system in which grades or classes of status or authority are ranked one above the other.

4.9 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

Ahuja, Ram: *Indian social system*, New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 1994.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

Andrews, C. F. *Mahatma Gandhi-His Life and Ideas.* New Delhi: Radha Publications, 1995.

Bagulia, M .A. *Social Classes*. New Delhi: Anmol Publications Pvt. Ltd, 2007.

Chetty, Rathinam. K. M. *Sarvodaya and Freedom: A Gandhian Appraisal.* New Delhi: Discovery Publishing House, 1991.

Pabla. A. S. *Warriors of Untouchables-Ambedkar and Gandhi* New Delhi: Cyber Tech Publications, 2008..

Parel,Anthony J. *Gandhi's Philosophy and the Quest for Harmony*,.New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Singh, Virendra Prakash. Ed. Caste *system and Social Change.* New Delhi: Commonwealth Publishers, 1992.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

Indira Gandhi National Open University
School of Interdisciplinary and
Trans-disciplinary Studies

MPYE – 015

Gandhian Philosophy

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

Block 4

RELEVANCE OF GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY

UNIT 1

Relevance of Non-Violence

UNIT 2

Holistic Vision of Life

UNIT 3

Social Egalitarianism and Gandhi

UNIT 4

Towards Peace and Harmony

Expert Committee

Prof. Gracious Thomas
Director, School of
Social Work
IGNOU

Prof. Renu Bharadwaj
School of Humanities
IGNOU

Prof. George
Panthanmackel,
Senior Consultant,
IGNOU

Dr. M. R. Nandan
Govt. College for
Women
Mandya - Mysore

Dr. Kuruvila
Pandikattu
Jnana-deepa
Vidyapeeth,
Ramwadi, Pune

Dr Babu Joseph
CBCI Centre
New Delhi

Prof. Tasadduq Husain
Aligarh Muslim
University, Aligarh

Dr. Bhuvaneswari
Lavanya Flats
Gangai Amman Koil
St.
Thiruvanmiyur
Chennai – 600 041

Dr. Alok Nag
Vishwa Jyoti Gurukul
Varanasi

Dr. Jose Kuruvachira
Salesian College &
IGNOU Study Centre
Dimapur, Nagaland

Dr. Sathya Sundar
Sethy
Dept of Humanities
IIT, Chennai.

Dr. Joseph Martis
St. Joseph’s College
Jeppu, Mangalore – 2

Dr. Jaswinder Kaur
Dhillon
147, Kabir park
Opp. GND University
Amristar – 143 002

Prof. Y.S. Gowramma
Principal,
College of Fine Arts,
Manasagangotri
Mysore – 570 001

Block Preparation

Units 1-4 Dr. Bharath Kumar
School of Humanities and Social Sciences
IIT, Indore.

Content Editor
Dr. V. John Peter
St. Joseph’s Philosophical College,
Kotagiri, Tamil Nadu.

Format Editor
Prof. Gracious Thomas
IGNOU, New Delhi.

Programme Coordinator
Prof. Gracious Thomas
IGNOU, New Delhi.

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

BLOCK INTRODUCTION

Is Gandhi relevant today? The question might sound strange as Gandhi was not of antiquity rather a phenomena just in our own times, perhaps few decades back. Terrorism and violence are everywhere. There are reports of widespread violence in different countries. Indeed, it is distressing that violent trends in human society should grow at such a fast pace when developmental activities have also been taking rapid strides. Not all efforts of international and national institutions as also respective governments have been successful in curbing the violent trends in human society and rooting out the causes for such occurrences. In such a context, would the legacy of non-violence propagated by Mahatma Gandhi still remain relevant is the concrete question. Gandhi challenged conventional wisdom, broke through traditional categories of thought, stretched the boundaries of imagination in all areas of life, and opened up new philosophical and practical possibilities. As a man of thought, he saw through the madness of modernity, and offered an alternative vision that combined the best insights of both the pre-modern and modern world-views while avoiding the self-indulgent individualism and moral complacency of the currently fashionable post-modernism.

The **Unit 1** attempts to understand the relevance of non-violence in today's times where terrorism and violence have pervaded every nook and corner of our society. In India, there has long been the legacy of non-violence propagated by Mahatma Gandhi. The unit gives a basic understanding of Gandhian concept of non-violence and explores the significance of *ahimsa*.

Unit 2 embellishes Gandhian holistic vision of life. The entire Gandhian thought rests on a holistic unity of conception. Gandhi invoked traditional concepts but he imparted to them a new social content. Fasting had long been part of a spiritual regimen; Gandhi made it a part of the armory of *satyagraha*. An ashram was considered a refuge from the hurly-burly of life for one's personal spiritual discipline; Gandhi used his ashrams to train social and political workers.

The **Unit 3** discusses Gandhi's concerns as an ardent social reformer committed to such egalitarian vision of the society. Egalitarianism is a belief that favors equality of some sort. Its general premise is that people should be treated as equals on certain dimensions such as race, religion, ethnicity, political affiliation, economic status, social status, and cultural heritage. Egalitarian doctrines maintain that all humans are equal in fundamental worth and all people should have the same rights. The Unit examines his efforts especially in the areas of annihilating untouchability, empowerment of women, the principle of *Sarvodaya* and diversity and dialogue between religions.

Unit 4 deals with the Gandhian vision of a peaceful and harmonious society. Gandhian thought and technique acquired universal appeal. The world has reached the cross-roads of history. Innumerable issues have cropped up posing a grave challenge to humankind. Nations are tied together in an inter-dependent framework. It was a technique of non-violent resolution of conflict. The Unit attempts to capture his vision of a non-violent peaceful and harmonious world. He always attempted a synthesis between theory and practice, between thought and work. For him a thought or theory had no meaning unless it was translated into practice. May we who study the thoughts of Gandhi take a vow to promote peace and harmony in this world.

UNIT 1 RELEVANCE OF NON-VIOLENCE

Contents

1.0 Objectives
1.1 Introduction
1.2 Concept of Non-violence
1.3 Non-violence and Satyagraha
1.4 Relevance
1.5 Limitations
1.6 Let Us Sum Up
1.7 Key Words
1.8 References and Further Readings

1.0 OBJECTIVES

Terrorism and violence have pervaded every nook and corner of our society. There are reports of widespread violence in different countries of the Third World, including India. Indeed, it is distressing that violent trends in human society should grow at such a fast pace when developmental activities have also been taking rapid strides. All efforts of international and national institutions as also respective governments have not been successful in curbing the violent trends in human society and rooting out the causes for such occurrences.

While materialism and the resultant greed, generated by such values have contributed to the increased violence in society, there is need to think seriously of ways and means to curb such trends. In India, there has long been the legacy of non-violence propagated by Mahatma Gandhi. It was used by Gandhi successfully in mobilizing the masses to fight the British, which ultimately was forced to leave. But what is significant is that in addition to the removal of foreign rule, he wanted to establish a democratic order, free from political, economic and social exploitation. The success of this strategy became the subject of much discussion and analysis and volumes have been written on the Gandhian technique of ahimsa or non-violence. The Unit attempts to understand the relevance of non-violence in today's times.

Thus by the end of this Unit you should be able:

- to have a basic understanding of Gandhian concept of non-violence;
- to comprehend the relevance of non-violence;
- to grasp the limitations of the method of non-violence.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

As is well known, Truth and non-violence were the basic tenets of Gandhian philosophy. Moralization of politics had been the dream of many political thinkers, to make it a reality had been Gandhi’s endeavour. As he aptly remarked: “Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind.” Referring to the problems of humanity created through exploitation of man by man and group by group, he thought these could be solved through *Satyagraha*, the organized use of truth, non-violence and the purity of means. Gandhi’s *Satyagraha* attempted to guide the individual towards the goal of higher life and also solve political and social problems. He called it the moral equivalent of war and that the 'soul force' or 'love force' used by the *Satyagrahis* in the form of non-violent resistance and civil disobedience with no hatred for their antagonists is more powerful, effective and creative than the destructive and death-dealing weapons of war.

Ahimsa-the non-violence was a *Dharma*, no matter if, for Gandhi, it was a plant of slow growth; and along with its activities, applicable in day-to-day practices, it was the means to achieve the goal. *Satyagraha*, pursuit of Truth and fully imbibed with *Ahimsa* was the weapon applied in political actions. He, as we know, largely succeeded in *Ahimsa* and Satyagraha, because he was brave, humble and free from hatred. All these three were, and are, fully within the scope of non-violence; in other words, they were, and are, themselves the best introduction of *Ahimsa*. And Mahatma Gandhi practiced them in best possible manner both in his individual life and public life.

Further, he loved everybody without any discrimination. Love is a value supplementary to *Ahimsa*. It is an ornament of the brave. In it everything is good, positive and beneficial provided it is not momentary. Mahatma Gandhi saw the ultimate Truth in love and said, 'To see the universal and pervading spirit of Truth face-to-face one must be able to love the meanest of certain as myself.' That is why; his non-violence was that of the brave. It was not born out of cowardice.

Extending the principle of non-violence into political space, he envisaged non-cooperation movement. Non-cooperation involved the purposeful withholding of cooperation or the unwillingness to initiate in cooperation with an opponent. The goal of noncooperation is to halt or hinder an industry, political system, or economic process. Methods of noncooperation include labor strikes, economic boycotts, civil disobedience, tax refusal, and general disobedience.

Gandhi’s emphasis was both on opposing the British Raj and on building a society that would make India worthy of her freedom. He led the famous “Salt March to the Sea” to make salt in defiance of the British tax laws and spent countless months in British jails, and at the same time he worked to end the caste system; he transformed the despised outcastes into “Harijans” (the children of God); he instituted the hand-spinning of thread and the hand-weaving of Khadi cloth;

he improved sanitation, and he established an entirely new concept of “basic education” to meet the needs of Indian villagers.

1.2 CONCEPT OF NON-VIOLENCE

Mahatma Gandhi and non-violence have become integral to each other and one cannot think of Gandhi without non-violence and non-violence without Gandhi in our own times. Gandhi’s concept of non-violence is very comprehensive and seminal. As we know violence has many forms, it could be physical or psychological, it could be individual or institutional and it could be obvious or subtle. To refrain from physical violence is not enough, one has to pledge oneself even to avoid any thought of violence. Now let us analyze the concept of *ahimsa* (non-violence) and its relation with *Satyagraha*.

The word *ahimsa* literally means non-injury, non-killing. Or in other words, it means abstaining from harming anyone in any form. It implies completely renunciation of one’s will or intention to hurt or harm any living being. First of all *ahimsa* means not only injury but also positive love and charity and this charity and love for everyone including to our enemy. The real *ahimsa*, according to Gandhi is that, one should not possess ill will even towards one’s enemy. True observance of *ahimsa* requires self-suffering rather than inflicting suffering upon the wrongdoer. Thus, it is clear that, to be follower of *ahimsa* in the Gandhian sense is not a very easy task. As according to Gandhi the follower of ahimsa must always be ready to die without any desire ever to hurt or kill anyone.

Gandhi distinguishes three kinds of *himsa* and took abstention from all of them as true *ahimsa*. The first one is *Krita himsa,* (violence done by one’s own self). Then there is *Karita himsa* (violence instigated and got done by somebody else). Lastly, there is *anumodiata himsa* (watching passively some violence done by someone else). According to Gandhi, the follower must abstain from all of these. Here *ahimsa* includes all moral virtues, like humility, forgiveness, love, charity, selflessness, fearlessness, innocence, nonattachment, etc. *Ahimsa* is such a moral virtue without which we could ceases to be a human. *Ahimsa* is our fundamental law. According to Gandhi, *ahimsa* is the soul force and without that we cannot become nonviolent. Therefore nonviolence is possible by the strength of the soul. *Ahimsa* is the weapon of the strong, not the weak. As Gandhi says, 'Nonviolence presupposes ability to strike. It is a conscious, deliberate restrain put upon one’s desire for vengeance.' So true nonviolence resides in our mind and it is an inner disposition.

Non-violence is not a negative virtue, but the positive one of love and compassion. He writes, '*ahimsa* is one of the world's great principles which no power on earth can wipe out. Thousands like myself may die in trying to vindicate the ideal but *ahimsa* will never die. And the gospel of *ahimsa* can be spread only through believers dying for the cause.' What Gandhi means by this is that non-violence is an eternal principle underlying human civilization because human existence depends on this principle. Man has been learning to practice this principle in life through centuries, though complete non-violence has not been possible yet.

Gandhi considers non-violence as the foundation of human civilization because it is this principle that prevents destruction of the human race along with the rest of the creation. It is this principle that has made man realize that human progress lies in the mutual love and respect for one another's life. Man has come to realize this truth about ahimsa after centuries of experiments. History of man is testimony to the triumph of non-violence because violence has never brought any good to mankind.

He believes non-violence as a means to Truth because he thinks that only a non-violent person can attain Truth. Truth which is the supreme principle of existence is attainable only by a person loving all existence. Non-violence is the love for all beings. Thus truth is fortified by and ushered in by love, according to Gandhi. Truth and non-violence thus are the two fundamental principles of existence, one standing for the ontological principle that sustains all existence, the other for the moral law that ensures and fortifies the former. Truth is the law of existence while non violence is the law of love. Both are moral laws in a sense but the law of Truth is more fundamental because the law of love presupposes it.

Gandhi writes, ' I am not a visionary. I claim to be a practical idealist. The religion of non-violence is not meant for the *rishis* and saints. It is meant for the common people as well. Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute. The spirit lies dormant in the brute and he knows no law but that of physical might. The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law—to the strength of the spirit.' Here Gandhi holds that the law of non-violence is the law of the spirit and is therefore superior to the law of the physical might. The law is the foundation of human life and culture. In this sense it is the law of the spiritual progress of mankind in general. Gandhi writes, 'The *rishis*, who discovered the law of non-violence in the midst of violence, were greater than Newton. They were themselves greater warriors than Wellington. Having themselves known the use of arms, they realized their uselessness and taught a weary world that its salvation lay not through violence but through nonviolence.' Non-violence is not the weapon of the weak but of the strong in the sense that only the strong man knows the limits of the physical strength. Nonviolence lies outside the boundary of violence because only when the limits of the latter are known or realized that we come face to face with non violence. The might of non-violence is far superior to the total strength of violence in the world.

The kind of non-violence advocated by Gandhi is based on cultivating a particular philosophical outlook and is integrally associated with Truth. According to Gandhi God is Truth and Truth is God. Thus one cannot think of non-violence without being accompanied by truthfulness. Gandhi believed in what he called Satyagraha, i.e., insistence on Truth. Thus first of all one should be thoroughly convinced of Truth of one’s cause before launching any struggle for that. Without such deep rooted conviction one cannot consistently avoid violence in ones struggle. Gandhi stressed purity of soul time and again. One is faced with crises in life, especially when such crises Gandhi used to deeply reflect on the causes and would not take any decision unless he felt his soul is pure and without any malice. It is not easy to practice such rigorous self-discipline for ordinary people, howsoever desirable. Nevertheless it should remain an ideal for us to be achieved. We see so much violence to achieve them. Similarly we see so much state try to pursue their own desire and to perpetuate their hold over the state.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Is it the case that preferring Non-violence amounts to being cowardice?

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………….

2) Discuss the relationship between Non-violence and Truth?

…………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………….

1.3-VIOLENCE AND *SATYAGRAHA*

The philosophy of *Satyagraha* and non-violence had been adopted by Gandhi from his religious beliefs. Some Western thinkers believe that he got the idea from the New Testament, specially from the Sermon on the Mount. It is true that Gandhi was greatly influenced by the Sermon. But he found that it only confirmed his own *Vaishnavite* faith. As is generally known the *Vaishnavites,* the *Jains* and the *Buddhists* believe that ahimsa or non-violence is the highest virtue. And Gandhi used this philosophy to the solution of political, economic and social problems.

Though non-violence may not seem to have any authority in Hindu religion, Gandhi had his own way of interpreting the Gita. He did not consider it a book on politics or political or military strategy but a religious scripture. It showed the way to self-realization through right action undertaken as one's *dharma* (duty) without consideration of its fruit, favourable or unfavourable. Whether Hindu scriptures sanction violence in asserting one's legitimate rights or not, may be a question under dispute but Gandhi believed that they lay emphasis on ahimsa or non-violence as a great virtue.

All founders of great religion have exhorted us to avoid violence and have stressed need for peace. It is not Buddhism and Christianity alone, even Islam’s central emphasis is on peace and non-violence. But he find so much violence precisely because religion as soon after the death of their founder turn into huge establishments and the politics of controlling these institutions begin and violence ensue. And of course, religious doctrine are used to legitimize violence giving false impression about the doctrines themselves. Individual violence, though condemnable is not as dangerous as institutional violence and particularly state violence.

He believed that injustice can be removed through Truth, non-violence and purity of means has been considered too idealistic to be put into practice. Those who make this criticism forget that by these means alone Gandhi achieved a great measure of success in the movements he led both in South Africa and India. He did not believe that the practice of non-violence in the political field was beyond the capacity of man, as he said: 'The first condition of non-violence is justice all round in every department of life…. The votary of non-violence has to cultivate the capacity for sacrifice of the highest type in order to be free from fear. He who has not overcome all fear cannot practice ahimsa to perfection'.

It is also proved that any conflict between individuals or communities or races or nations can be resolved, when the traditional methods of reasoning and peaceful negotiations fail, not taking recourse to the usual armed rebellion or war which is immoral and against human nature and divine law of love, but by adopting the technique of Satyagraha, i.e., the spirituality of combat. It enjoins and empowers the *Satyagrahis* to hang on firmly or adhere steadfastly to truth and non-violence in resisting and defying unjust laws unmindful of the suffering which civil disobedience brings. *Satyagraha* seeks to convert the opponent to the Truth through self-suffering and sacrifice of the *Satyagrahis*. In other words, by putting the law of ' Condemn the Evil but, at the same time Love the Evil-doer', *Satyagraha* pierces through the heart of the opponent, opens his eyes to see the Truth, and weans him away from untruth and violence. In order to bring about such a radical transformation in the antagonist, the *Satyagrahi* must have absolute faith in self-suffering as a means of revealing the Truth to the opponent and hence a source of new life to the antagonist. He says ' the appeal of reasoning is more to the head, but the penetration of the heart comes from suffering. It opens up the inner understanding of man.'

In order to be effective, self-suffering, the core of *Satyagraha* should be reinforced with courage of conviction and strong will power to hold on steadfastly to *Ahimsa* in the face of brute force. in fact , Gandhi advised that ' when there is only a choice between cowardice and violence I would advice violence'. He understood and practise non-violence as in its positive sense as 'love in action'. Thus for rigorous practice of non-violence strict self-discipline is highly necessary. Gandhi had practiced this strict self-discipline to a degree of perfection. If one accepts Truth through self-discipline no violence of any degree will be involved. Anything enforced from above, be it truth, involves. Thus non-violence has to be accompanied by strict self-discipline. A non-violence resister has to have great patience. In fact truth and patience are quite integral to each other. One can hardly pursue the truth without inexhaustible amount of patience.

Such an approach when carried out in the best spirit of nonviolence has four important characteristics: (1) Participants fight tyranny, aggression, an evil system with all the vigour at their command, but they believe in the worth and dignity of their opponent and insist upon loving him even when he showers abuse or inflicts physical punishment upon them, yes, even when he kills them. (2) Participants try to bring about a change of attitude within their enemy; they strive to raise his sights, not to subdue, cripple, or kill him. (3) They take loss and suffering upon themselves. They do not inflict pain upon another, nor threaten him with pain. There is no warning of retaliation, massive or otherwise. It is important to bear in mind that nonviolent action does not mean the absence of violence, nor the absence of anguish and suffering, but that the agony involved is taken upon one's self and not visited upon an opponent. (4) Constructive work is undertaken wherever possible. Protest against injustice, against destructive systems and practices is not enough. The eradication of poverty, the building of cooperatives, the establishment of village industry, the improvement of educational facilities, these and similar efforts must be constantly entered into.

The term "nonviolence" is often linked with or even used as a synonym for pacifism; however, the two concepts are fundamentally different. Pacifism denotes the rejection of the use of violence as a personal decision on moral or spiritual grounds, but does not inherently imply any inclination toward change on a socio-political level. Nonviolence, on the other hand, is most often associated with the intent to achieve social or political change. Indeed, the desire to pursue change effectively may be a reason for the rejection of violence. Also, a person may advocate nonviolence in a specific context while advocating violence in other contexts.

1.4 RELEVANCE OF NON-VIOLENCE

The acid test of relevance of works and views of a great man is definitely the application of them in prevailing conditions of time and space. Mahatma Gandhi is fortunately among those few great men in the entire human history whose individual life, works and views not only had proved to be great and exemplary during his own lifetime but there relevance and significance remained intact after his passing away. Recognizing the relevance and effectiveness of non-violence, United Nations observes October 2– the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi as International Non-Violence Day.

For, Gandhi became ideal hero for thousands around the world in general and renowned figures like Martin Luther King Junior of America, Nelson Mandela of South Africa and Ninoy Aquino of the Philippines in particular. Simultaneous to this, his views and works are still worth giving a thought, and if they are applied according to the prevailing conditions of time and space, no doubt, they are fully capable of bringing sound and beautiful results and some time beyond expectations.

Many examples of non-violent action include: Martin Luther King's adoption of Gandhi's nonviolent methods in the struggle to win civil rights for African Americans, and César Chávez's campaigns of nonviolence in the 1960s to protest the treatment of farm workers in California. The 1989 "Velvet Revolution" in Czechoslovakia that saw the overthrow of the Communist government is considered one of the important of the largely nonviolent revolutions. Many ruthless dictatorships have been undermined as a result of mass protest by unarmed civilians, such as those of the shah in Iran (1979), Marcos in the Philippines(1986), Pinochet in Chile (1989) and Ceausescu in Romania(1989). Most recently the nonviolent campaigns of Leymah Gbowee and the women of Liberia were able to achieve peace after a 14-year civil war. In an essay, "To Abolish War," evolutionary biologist Judith Hand advocated for the use of nonviolent direct action to dismantle the global war machine.

It may be pertinent to mention here that Gandhi believed and showed that civil resistance is the inherent right of every citizen and is a sovereign remedy in the hands of the people. His political theory and action can only be appreciated if this note of defiance of evil and resistance to any irresponsible authority, irrespective of political forms, which tramples on the individual's liberty and freedom, is duly recognized. The legacy of Gandhi, Dr. King and many others stands to be seriously challenged at this juncture of human history. Both of them as also several political thinkers have viewed violence and democracy as incompatible. But Gandhi's interpretation gains relevance and appreciation from communist thinkers as he considered any sort of exploitation of man by man indistinguishable from violence.

It is not possible to indefinitely bear injustice and tyranny. The unchecked violence of tyrants degrades human beings. Pioneers in every field have always worked for freedom of belief, expression, movement etc. If nations do not adopt Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence to remove injustices and resolve national and international disputes, there is no escape from hate, violence and war. There is also no escape from weapons of war becoming sharper and ever more destructive. Today, we have reached a stage when their use will not only destroy civilization but may also destroy the human race itself.

One can legitimately ask: why should non-violence be used when violence offers more tangible and faster solutions? It is important to realize that the use of violence to solve a social or political problem creates a host of other problems in its wake. No matter how pure and sublime one's aim is, use of violence to achieve it can never be justified. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi: 'Violence breeds violence...Pure goals can never justify impure or violent action...They say the means are after all just means. I would say means are after all everything. As the means, so the end....If we take care of the means we are bound to reach the end sooner or later tool' that is available to all. One doesn't need either time or resources to acquire this tool. Every single person in this world can practice non-violence right from this moment, if one realizes its importance.

Also, non-violent approach breaks the cycle of violence and counter-violence, which is usually triggered by the use of violence as a solution. If one group attacks another one violently, the attacked group is naturally instigated to retaliate with violence. This, in turn, provokes the first group to counter-attack with fiercer vilence. This chain reaction continues until the government agencies effectively quell it or one of the groups is completely wiped out i.e. until a group has 'won.' How can we term this outcome as a 'win' when there is no one to celebrate the 'win' because this disastrous cycle results into nothing but massive bloodshed and deaths? Ethnic cleansing and communal riots are the obvious examples in which there is widespread bloodshed.

In fact, retaliatory violence legitimizes aggressive violence in the eyes of people. Also, violence 'empowers' victims and they begin to behave with the sense of power, which is the root of evil. Thus 'empowerment' of victims of violence through violence aggravates the situation. The victim in fact is not empowered through violence as he thinks. He, in turn, also become part of the same game and both aggressors and victims find justification in each other and become each other's mirror image.

It is a fact that non-violent Satyagraha sometimes takes longer time but, definitely, it cause less damage to persons and property and does not leave trace of hatred and ill-will. Ultimately imbibed with Ahimsa it is pursuit of Truth and Truth wins always. It is not argued that everyone will have faith in non-violence. It is very natural that some will not like it due to difference in perception. Non-violence, as a strategy, was often rejected and criticized by many, basically on the grounds that violence is a necessary accompaniment to revolutionary change and that right to self-defense is fundamental.

Whichever side of the coin one chooses to look at, violent means cannot ensure a sustainable peace. To achieve a good end, means should also be good. A fragile peace is no peace at all. Non-violence, in essence, is the use of peaceful means to bring about a positive and lasting social or political change. Use of non-violence as a solution is tantamount to giving aid to the injured, water to the thirsty and food to the hungry.

The obvious question which arises is: whether a non-violent society is foreseeable in the distant future. While attitudes have to change, so does the character of the state and its relations and behaviour with the people. One cannot deny that not until humanity dies will Gandhi's philosophy have relevance for us…it was a voice against injustice and oppression – the eternal voice of humanism. To practice non-violence, all we have to do is to understand what non-violence really is. What changes it can bring and how we can apply it to our personal, social and global life. There is a saying, 'No creation is possible without imagination'.

1.5 LIMITATIONS

Many people felt that non-violence as a principle and as a tactic could work in the context of colonial rule in India, for it wrong- footed the British, putting them on the defensive. Until then they had been able to counter what was normally the petty violence of protesters with a ruthless use of their superior gunpowder. Faced with non-violence they were left in a quandary, as their counter-violence merely served to reveal the moral bankruptcy of their rule. In this respect, Gandhi's insistence on complete non-violence was critical in achieving a moral advantage for nations.

But can we consider non-violence as an absolute value? It is often argued that non-violence works very well against opponents with a moral conscience but not so much useful against an enemy without moral sense. For example, Nelson Mandela who is a great admirer of Gandhi felt that non-violence could not succeed in South Africa against a white regime which was not prepared to accept the morality of the struggle for democratic rights and which was prepared to use the most violent and murderous means to suppress it. As Mandela wrote 'Non-violence passive resistance is effective as long as your opponent adheres to the same rules as you do. But if peaceful protest is met with violence its efficacy is at an end'. Gandhi did not accept this sort of critique-there was, he held no human without some form of moral conscience, and even the Nazis might be made to yield. As he stated 'The hardest metal yields to sufficient heat'. Dennis Dalton, otherwise a strong admirer of Gandhi, felt that Gandhian method may not have worked in Nazi Germany. Under such a totalitarian regime, even the slightest dissidence was crushed, with arrests in the dead of night and instant executions or incarceration in concentration camps in such a way that the population as a whole remained in ignorance. He felt that *Satyagraha* can only succeed when the government is ambivalent, as was the case in India and in western democracies. In situations in which rulers are prepared to eliminate many of their citizens to remain in power, it cannot work. For example, Martin Luther King does not hesitate to call upon governmental authorities to use force to restore order when nonviolent Negroes are mobbed by violent whites. This is a tacit admission of the limits of human endurance in the given situation; it is not possible to ask men to suffer perpetually or to seek victory only through sainthood.

In a sense, it can be said that Gandhi’s quest for a predominantly non-violent society as the realizable goal as unattainable due to human imperfection. It indicates the direction rather than the destination, the process rather than the consummation. The structure of the state that will emerge as a result of a non-violent revolution will be a compromise, a via media, between the ideal non-violent society and the facts of human nature. It will be the attainable middle way of Gandhi, the first step after the revolution, towards the ideal.

1.6 LET US SUM UP

We have looked at the Gandhi's concept of non-violence and his search for and perfection of a tool of political action that would yet remain faithful to his philosophical commitment to non-violence. We tried to understand the call of *Ahimsa* is to use the ' love- force' or 'brute-force' to overcome evil not by inflicting injury or death on the evil-doer but by self-suffering with ardent and earnest hope of bringing about a change of heart in the evil-prone antagonist. The purpose here was to review the dynamics of Gandhian non-violent resistance - its operation and functioning in the system - and to see how it was used by Gandhi as a political weapon with the spirit of positive, liberative and self-suffering love.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is the role of a *Satyagraha* in Non-violence?

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………….

2) Is Non-violence an absolute value?

…………………………………………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………...

………………………………………………………………………………………...

………………………………………………………………………………………...

1.7 KEY WORDS

Satyagrahi: seeker to convert the opponent to the Truth through self-suffering and sacrifice.

Pacifism: opposed to war or rejection of the use of violence of any kind.

1.8 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

Arthur and Weinberg, Lila. Eds. *Instead of Violence.* New York: Grossman Publishers, 1963.

Bondurant, Joan V. *Conquest of Violence.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958.

Erikson Erik H. *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence.* New York: Norton, 1969.

Gregg, Richard. *The Power of Non-Violence.* New York: Fellowship Publications, 1959.

Kuper, Leo. *Passive Resistance in South Africa.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957.

Roberts, Adam. Ed. *Civilian Resistance as a National Defense: Non-violent Action Against Aggression.* Harrisburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 1968.

Rudolph, Susanne Hoeber. "The New Courage: An Essay on Gandhi's Psychology" in *World Politics*, 16 October 1963, 98-117.

Sibley, Mulford Q. Ed. *The Quiet Battle.* Garden City: Anchor Books, 1963.

UNIT 2 HOLISTIC VISION OF LIFE

Contents

2.0 Objectives
2.1 Introduction
2.2 Interpretation of *Purusharthas*
2.3 Morality and Religion
2.4 The Political and the Spiritual
2.5 Let Us Sum Up
2.6 Key Words
2.7 References and Further Readings

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The entire Gandhian thought rests on a holistic unity of conception. It is grounded in a basic moral vision of the world. Gandhi invoked traditional concepts but he imparted to them a new social content. As in the case of religion, the very word 'religion' received a refreshing definition from him; it was not the Hindu religion, but the religion which transcends Hinduism, which changes one's very nature , which binds one indissolubly to the truth within and whichever purifies. True spirituality was not merely speculation on the Absolute, however profound or philosophical nor was it a quest for personal salvation. It manifests itself according to the extent he realizes his humanity i.e. his oneness with his fellow-men. His religion sometimes looks indistinguishable from humanism. He gave a creative interpretation to several age-old Indian concepts. As for *Maya*, the world being an illusion, he argued that we cannot dismiss the suffering of our fellow creatures and therefore provide a more alibi for ourselves. *Dharma* was the performance of duty not only by the citizen, but by the ruler as well. Fasting had long been part of a spiritual regimen; Gandhi made it a part of the armory of *satyagraha*. An ashram was considered a refuge from the hurly-burly of life for one's personal spiritual discipline; Gandhi used his ashrams to train social and political workers.

The Unit attempts to discover the underlying holistic vision and perspective that informs his views on a variety of topics. Thus by the end of the Unit you should be able

- to comprehend Gandhi's vision of holistic unity of concepts;
- to appreciate how different elements meet in Gandhi's thinking and reinforce one another.

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Gandhi's philosophy has been interpreted from different angles. Some treat it primarily as a political theory. Others approach it as a religious philosophy of great contemporary relevance. Still others see it as an original theory of conflict resolution and non-violence. There are those who regard it as containing ideas extremely relevant for both economic development and for the maintenance of a sustainable economy. Finally there are those who find in it significant ideas on the relationship of art to society.

There is of course a great deal of truth in what these interpretations have to say. Taken individually, each gives an in-depth, but unavoidably partial understanding of the whole. The fact is that individual themes in Gandhi's philosophy make full sense only when they are seen in their relationship to one another and to the whole. It is the reality of this interaction that needs to be understood. It is not enough to juxtapose a series of different Gandhi’s - the political, the religious, the ethical, or any other. It is not enough to know that Gandhi teaches non-violence. To know his doctrine of non-violence really well one has to know how it interacts with his position on war or his theory of the state and the relations between states. Likewise it is not enough to know that he put his religious insights into socially and politically beneficial practice. To know his religious philosophy really well we have to know how it comports with secularism that he also professed. And so on with the other major themes of his philosophy. The point is that there is an inner dynamism that brings the diverse elements into a fruitful relationship with one another. And it is necessary to understand the nature of this inner dynamism if we are to understand his philosophy accurately and fully.

"Being more things than one" is a label that fits Gandhi well. Any study of his thought that aspires to be comprehensive is bound to expose to the comparative perspective that it provides. The ancient and the modem, the Indian and the Western perspectives jointly illumine the substance of his thought. The point is how the different elements come together and constitute a coherent whole. Now, let us look at Gandhi's interpretation of *purusharthas* as a case in point to understand how he brings in commonality between seemingly incongruent themes.

2.2 INTERPRETATION OF *PURUSHARATHAS*

The etymological meaning of the term purushartha, made up of purusha (spirit) and artha (for the sake of) is that which is pursued for the sake of the spirit or the immortal soul. As understood in Indian thought, there are four purusharthas: *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*. *Dharma* is righteousness. *Artha* is material possession. *Kama* is the enjoyment of this-worldly sensuous pleasures. *Moksha* is seeking spiritual liberation, thereby attaining salvation. These classifications establish an account of the individual and his objectives that incorporates both the social and the transcendental. The four *purusharthas* are interrelated and do not operate in isolation. Their relation is hierarchical though, not necessarily unidirectional.

Dharma is of two kinds: *varnashrama dharma* and *samanya dharma*. The former is specifically related to each *varna* and *ashrama* and the latter is general and universal. The universal *dharma* consists of *ahimsa* (non-injury to all living beings) *satyam* (truthfulness), cleanliness, freedom from malice, compassion and tolerance.

The other two, namely, *artha* and *kama*, are not autonomous and are placed under the supervision of *dharma* and are directed towards *moksha*. For instance, *kama*, which is seeking sensuous pleasure, is not ignored. Pleasure is not to be gratified by following individual desires and wants but is related to other *purusharthas*. If it is left unsupervised it can relapse into a lower level. It is in fact regulated by *dharma* that allows only ethically sanctioned enjoyment. Whereas *Dharma Sastras* centralizes *dharma*, *Artha Sastra*, while not rejecting the primacy of *dharma*, tends to restore more importance to *artha* and *kama*. *Moksha* is liberation. There are different paths to achieve *moksa*. They consist of: *karma yoga*, *jnana yoga*, *bhakti yoga*, etc.

The mutual relationship between *purusharathas*, whether they share an oppositional relation or a harmonious one, is a matter of contention. But one can say that in most parts of the tradition, there is a radical separation of the spiritual from the political, the economic from the ethical which had cost Indian civilization dearly. Indian religious philosopher-saints are also to be blamed for placing too much emphasis on other worldliness and *Vedanta*, and for not placing equal or greater emphasis on the importance of the active life. Some commentators felt that because of the excessive emphasis on the other-worldly, Indians did not form a permanent state for the whole of India, they did not develop manufacturing and industries, and they were unable to resist successfully external aggression. Indian intellectuals were mostly engaged in mental gymnastics about Logic, Vedanta, Poetics and similar subjects, giving little attention to the means of removing the weaknesses and the defects of the country's political and economic systems.

However, in Gandhi, with his holistic vision of life, one can find a refreshing account of *purusharathas*. He discards the old ways and attempts to creatively reconstitute the four aims of life. As a result there is now a new Gandhian paradigm. It has a specific view of the universe and of human nature, as being composed of perishable body and imperishable soul. Above all, it has a new theory of the *purusharthas*. Whereas the old paradigm saw the *purusharthas* as working in mutually exclusive terms, the new paradigm shows how they may be made to work in interactive terms. The starting point of such rethinking should include a new understanding of the meaning of the theory of the *purusharthas*. He actually demonstrated through his life how mutuality between the four goals of life could be realized. He considered his struggle for political and economic betterment of the masses as the only path to *moksha* available to him. Accordingly, a radical separation of *moksha* from the rest was not justified. The theory as Gandhi understood it was applicable to individuals, nations, and civilizations. It was not aligned to any particular theology or metaphysics. If it needed a theological grounding, Christian and Islamic theology could do as easily as could Hindu theology.

In *Hind Swaraj*, he pointed out for the first time that a dynamic relationship ought to exist between the pursuit of *swaraj* as political freedom and *swaraj* as spiritual freedom, for the pursuit of one assisted the pursuit of the other. He advocated that a moral link ought to exist between the arts and the political life. Even in Sabarmati Ashram, politics and economics were not unconnected matters, being linked to *dharma* and *mokhsa*. Celibacy was an important part of ashram life, thereby underlining its dynamic relationship to the pursuit of politics, ethics and spirituality.

In his Autobiography, the pursuit of *Moksha* is identified as the pursuit of Truth. Those who aspire to *Moksha* cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. He says, in his case, his devotion to Truth has drawn him to the field of politics. To maintain the holistic relationship of *moksha* to *artha*, one needs the support of *dharma* as well. That was why those who say that *dharma* had nothing to do with politics did not know what *dharma* meant. Also, the pursuit of *moksha* understood in this way involved a continuous process of self-purification which brings in celibacy too. In his translation of *Gita* also he says, the author of the *Gita* has dispelled the delusion that in activities such as trade and commerce, *dharma* has no place. He also redefined the concept of *purusharatha* to include women as well. He says that the word *purusha* should be interpreted in its etymological sense, and not merely to mean a man. That which dwells in the *pura*, the body, is *purusha*. If we interpret the word *purusharatha* in this sense, it can be equally used for men and women.

In this sense, Gandhi attempted to reconstitute the system of values of Indian civilization and to rehabilitate the principle of mutuality especially between *artha* and *moksha*. One can observe how two Gandhis - the politician and the *sannyasi* (ascetic) - co-exist with internal integration. It was as if the two Gandhis were unable to separate from each other. To the British, Gandhi appeared to be a political representative of Indians, to the Indians he appeared to be a holy man.

2.3 MORALITY AND RELIGION

The dynamic unity between morality and religion in Gandhi accrues from the centrality of Gandhi's moral vision. All of Gandhi's thinking is based on a fundamental moral science of the world. For Gandhi, man is essentially involved in the moral enterprise of getting at the truth-very fundamentally at the truth of himself by overcoming the ego and its self-projection, as also and, consequently at the truth of the other, in one's knowledge of the other. All of life's activity must be based in truth and for this ahimsa or love and freedom from ego-projection must inform man's life and action so that man, through his mundane life, actualizes the moral enterprise. For Gandhi, morality has to inform a complete life. It cannot be the domain of just one aspect of man's existence while he lives out the other moments using whatever means he deems appropriate. There is no distinction between means and ends in Gandhi's moral thinking, and the moral life cannot be alienated from the rest of man's existence. The moral vision, if it is to be genuine, is the core of a good life and must be reflected in the whole of life.

For Gandhi, religion is nothing if, not a culture-specific articulation of a community's moral vision, and its spiritual experiments in trying to internalize that vision. Religion for Gandhi is built up around a core moral vision. It is a culture specific articulation of this moral sense and develops in to a religious tradition with the moral and the social and cultural elements interlinked in to a system. Thus it is that Gandhi himself attempts to distinguish the core of a religion which it shares with other religion from the social aspect, which is culture-specific. When religion is grounded in a moral response to the human predicament it is certain to share element of that response with other religion born of other cultures, for the fundamentals of morality and moral consciousness remain the same.

He elucidates the relationship between morality and religion by saying ‘I reject any religious doctrine that does not appeal to reason and is in conflict with morality. I tolerate unreasonable religious sentiment when it is not immoral’. As soon as we lose the moral basis, we cease to be religious. There is no such thing as religion overriding morality. Man of instance cannot be untruthful, cruel and incontinent and claim to have God on his side. He explains what he means by religion, ‘It is not the Hindu religion which I certainly prize above other religions ,but the religion which transcends Hinduism which changes one’s very nature, which binds one indissolubly to the truth within and whichever purifies. It is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself, known its maker and appreciated the true correspondence between the maker and itself’. So, for Gandhi, religion articulates a moral vision and it shares the core moral vision across traditions with other religions. The basic point of connection between religion and politics is furnished by morality. For him, religion is to be understood not as the dictates of a transcendent being, but as a spiritual understanding of a moral vision from within particular religious traditions. It is meant to articulate moral and ethical insights within a particular cultural and spiritual tradition. Thus religion and morality are inalienable.

He maintained that there is a core moral consciousness within every religion. Different religions share elements of their basic moral core, for humanity has a common moral response to the human predicament. This has important lessons for religious toleration and for the cross-cultural borrowings for where different religions are culture-specific articulations of a fundamental moral vision, the dichotomy between them is peripheral and secondary. At heart they are all about righteousness and virtue. This is an important lesson in religious toleration and explains Gandhi’s own on the same. Each religion can reevaluate itself from time to time and question its cultural and social periphery in terms of the core moral vision. It can, if it finds certain customs and practices wanting, rejuvenate them by bringing aspects of the moral vision to bear upon their understanding and evaluation. It is the moral vision which is sacred and not the customs and social framework that is simply part of cultural baggage, as it were.

Another interesting point about Gandhi’s conception is that, since morality is the core of religion, moral consciousness and moral ideas can quite comfortably be articulate in religious and spiritual terminology. This is in contrast to the Kantian enterprise which tries to understand morality as independent of religion. Though both the Kantian and Gandhian endeavour have a common opposition to utilitarianism in morality, they differ in this very important aspect. For Gandhi’s moral sense can be undergrounded in religion and use its spiritual and belief framework. Thus, true religion and true morality are inseparably bound up with each other. Religion is to morality what water is to the seed that is sown in the soil.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Reflect on the uniqueness of Gandhi's interpretation of purusharathas.

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………….

2) Can Religion be coterminus with Morality?

…………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………...

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

2.4 THE POLITICAL AND THE SPIRITUAL

Now, we look at the reconciliation of the political and the spiritual, a moral obligation on every citizen in Gandhian scheme of things, based on the understanding of Truth about politics being a part of a *purusartha* where the ethics of the means had to be as legitimate as the ethic of the end itself.

For Gandhi, politics must be grounded in morality, in the moral vision. As the most important activity which is the condition of ensuring a civilized existence and the possibility for the good life to its citizens, politics cannot be alienated from the moral enterprise. The good man makes politics a part of his moral life. It is the one place where man can be of most service to his fellow men, where he has the greatest opportunity of moral growth. There the overcoming of the self projection of the ego has the best and most far reaching results. Morality is the basis of what Gandhi calls “true politics” in contrast to “power politics” or degenerated ego-centered political action where the political life is alienated from the moral. Further, since politics is grounded in morality and morality can be well articulated, and the moral enterprise lived, in religious and spiritual terms, the whole political enterprise can become moral one.

As long as religion is understood in terms of the moral vision, Politics can be interpreted as a spiritual exercise for moral growth. This can be done by understanding politics in terms of service and social well-being. Contemporaneously, the whole exercise can be done of self-purification and overcoming of ego-aggrandizement by a practical ahimsa interpreted in terms of love and service, beautifully coordinating the political into an enterprise of moral growth and development.

This is the “true politics” of Gandhi which he means by the constructive programme in politics, as in service oriented politics. This is instantiated by the issue in his “constructive programme”. i.e., issues like those of village upliftment, sanitation, education, removal of untouchability, *khadi*,and so on.

Being a *purushartha*, politics belongs to the field of *artha*. As such it is the pursuit of legitimate self-interest, individual and collective, attained through the exercise of constitutionally permitted use of force. Politics is both a mode of life and a mode of activity. As a mode of life, it is life lived in the political community, which today, in most cases, is the civic nation. As a mode of activity, it is the striving for power and wealth within the bounds of ethics (*dharma*) and within the requirements of a healthy spiritual life (the pursuit of *moksha*). Because politics is a *purushartha*, it is necessary for full human development. Again, because it is a *purushartha*, it is by definition, compatible with the other basic ends of life -*dharma*, *kama*, and *moksha*. The practice of sound politics should therefore be mindful of the need to cultivate the relationship between all the *purusharthas*. Such cultivation should take place in the realm of civil society, however. It therefore forbids the use of the coercive power of the law or other means of coercion to promote spirituality. That is to say, the maintenance of the relationship between the spiritual and the political may not lead to the establishment of a state-religion, persecution, tyranny, or theocracy of any kind. On the contrary, the reconciliation between the political and the spiritual is possible only in a free society.

Gandhi's notion of the "spiritual" concerns the pursuit of truth in all its diversity. More specifically, spirituality is concerned with the eternal in us as distinct from the temporal that surrounds us. In another sense, the pursuit of the spiritual is concerned with the desire for communion with God. In still another sense, the spiritual is what concerns the welfare of the immortal "spirit" - *purusha*, or *atman* - that dwells within. In Gandhi's ordinary language the term used for spirit was soul. This concern expressed itself in many ways: for example, in the exercise of soul-force, as in *satyagraha*. All that contributed to and maintained the welfare of the soul was part of the spiritual life.

Very typically, the spiritual life for Gandhi was inseparable from action in the world, from the active life in the fields of politics, economics, and social reform. In this respect his spirituality differed radically from the spirituality of the yogis and ascetics of the past and the present. Social and political action informed by true spirituality was able to take the true measure of wealth, power and pleasure. In this sense the spiritual life facilitated the 'practice of justice and non-violence.

Finally, true spirituality for him was an indispensable means of overcoming the most evil of all hatreds - hatred based on religion. That was why in his spiritual life respect for all religions was counted as one of the eleven virtues. Gandhi's humanism had a very deep spiritual content. In affirming the intrinsic connection between the spiritual life and the political life, he stands almost alone among the great teachers of India. The spirituality that Gandhi has in mind has nothing to do with sectarianism coming from any quarter. Any spirituality that promotes justice, non-violence, and peace is compatible with Gandhian politics. This left Gandhi with a unique conception of politics and it was this conception which he actualized in his political experiments.

Critique of Civilization

Gandhi articulated his conception of civilization in response to the disturbing features he perceived in modern civilization. His critique of civilization becomes important to the final development of his understanding of politics and spirituality. His work H*ind Swaraj* was a political, economic, moral and cultural response to the colonial experience. In that he opposes industrial revolution, which brought into existence the modern western civilization. Gandhi disliked India turning into a capitalistic country. As he remarked “It would be folly to assume that an Indian Rockefeller would be better than an American Rockefeller.” Therefore, culture from Gandhian perspective is based on spiritual, moral and non-mechanical.

Gandhi thinks that that modern civilization is obsessed with ‘hunger of wealth and greedy pursuit of worldly pleasure. Here, human being devotes his whole energy to increase wealth in order to get pleasure and bodily comfort for his live and living. But this sort of life brings cruelty, the oppression, exploitation, and indignity etc. And that we can call the hypocrisy of modern civilization. Therefore in the quest for material comfort modern civilization “takes note neither of morality nor of religion”. And human being’s entire effort is vested in acquiring wealth and material pleasure to satisfy his materialistic life in this materialistic world. According to him modern civilization based on violence and does not respect all life and, in its progress onward, it has not hesitated to resort to wholesale destruction of even human life.

Thus, the quest for material pleasure leads man to ceaseless activity in order to satisfy his unlimited material comfort. So the industrialization took its birth and it becomes the means of satisfying the individual's hunger for more and more worldly goods. But Gandhi condemns the industrial mode of production. Because industrialization helps pamper the human body through a proliferation of wants and it reinforces the structures of inequity, exploitation and domination. The industrial mode of production brings two types of tendencies towards physical and social mobility. The 'multiplication of wants and machinery contrived to supply them’ reduce man to a mere cog in the machine. Thus, for Gandhi, modern civilization stands for the emasculation of man, promoting exploitation and dominance and unleashing violence and killing morality. He rejects this sort of industrialization. According to him discontent, unrest and conflict become endemic in modern civilization. There are factors like, machine including railways, professions like those of lawyers and doctors and the institution of modern education, that reinforce the tendency of modern civilization to prefer the pursuit of self-interest against morality and religion. And railways symbolizes man's attempt to annihilate space and time and thus transgress natural limits. It has several adverse consequences. Mainly it violates the natural rhythm of human body.

Thus, by rushing about from place to place by means of railways and 'such other maddening conveniences,' man transgresses natural limits. Secondly it has been instrumental in the rapid spread of disease. Thirdly railways, by joining distance place have made it possible to transport goods in a short time from cheaper markets to dearer markets creating conditions of scarcity at some places that ultimately lead to famine. Gandhi denounces the professions of lawyers and doctors. Apart from the fact those lawyers have a vested interest in advancing quarrels, which for them is 'one of the avenues of becoming wealthy'. They have also helped in consolidating and tightening the grip of English rule in India by accepting and giving legitimacy to English law for regulating Indian affairs. As far the doctors, they receive Gandhi's wrath not only because they practice vivisection and use animal fat or spirituous liquors in the preparation of medicines, but also because they encourage indulgence and therefore weaken control over mind.

Gandhi also is very critical of modern education as well. Gandhi argues that knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic or of geography, astronomy, algebra, geometry, etc., may help in performing the responsibilities of an occupation but it does not help in character building on which depends the performance of one's main role in life. According to Gandhi true education is something different. Man is made of three constituents, the body, mind and spirit. Spirit is the one permanent element in man. The body and mind function on account of it. Hence, we can call that education which reveals the qualities of spirit. Having looked at Gandhi’s views on education and training, we now turn to his observations on modernity and his critique of materialism and his alternative ideas.

On Modernity

Gandhi has been a staunch critique of the modern civilization based on the modern science and technology. In his *Hind Swaraj* he has outlined the moral bankruptcy of this civilization because of its excessive reliance on the brute force and the materialist values. Gandhi is of the view of that science and technology of the West which have shaken the spiritual foundations of human civilization are pursuing an amoral goal. He rejects the ideal of science and technology which consists in securing human progress and happiness through introduction of machines and other mechanical devices. Science and technology have in fact contributed to the human misery, according to Gandhi, by their relentless pursuit of material progress at the cost of spiritual progress and happiness.

According to Gandhi, introduction of machines and industrialization have resulted in more poverty and misery because man has been displaced from his natural habitat and work. This has made man dependent on the heavy machines and the other gadgets which have replaced human labour. For Gandhi, the industrialized civilization of the West has caused the moral and spiritual sickness in man leading to a total collapse of the moral values. Thus modernity has failed to bring progress to mankind. Modernity has been associated with the material progress and the consequent loss of human values. Hence Gandhi calls for a total rejection of the soulless civilization of the modern West. Gandhi's calls for a return to the simple and ideal village life and the life of the less material; needs and more spiritual aspiration is predicated upon his belief that human spirit is higher than the human body and that the moral and spiritual values are higher than the material values.

Gandhi's critique of modernity is based on his ideal of spiritual progress of humanity which is based on the pursuit of truth and nonviolence. A spiritually enlightened human society will be far more nonviolent and wedded to truth than any other civilization. The foundation of this new society will lie in our total dedication to truth and nonviolence. Modernity is based on the cognitive idea of truth as the foundation of a scientific world-view, not a moral one. Only if truth is so conceived can science become the paradigmatic pursuit of our culture, without it the scientific outlook lacks its deepest theoretical source. It is a mark of Gandhi intellectual ambition that by making it exclusively and exhaustively moral and experiential notion instead, he was attempting to repudiate the paradigm at the deepest possible conceptual level.

He strives to drive home the point that the cognitive ideal of truth is the source of the technological exploitation of man and nature and therefore he pleads for a total replacement of this ideal by the ideal of truth as a moral and spiritual ideal. With truth as cognitive being replaced by truth as moral and spiritual, Gandhi has turned the modern civilization on its head. He envisages the new world-order based on the spiritual grasp of truth through non-violent actions and thus on the actions based on spiritual understanding of life of man and nature. This is predisposed to bring about a moral and spiritual transformation of man thus entailing a transformation in the metaphysics of man and nature.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) How Gandhi reconciles polity and the spirituality?

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………….

2) What are the criticisms against Western Civilization?

…………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………...

……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

2.5 LET US SUM UP

Gandhi challenged conventional wisdom, broke through traditional categories of thought, stretched the boundaries of imagination in all areas of life, and opened up new philosophical and practical possibilities. He was a man of both thought and action, a rare combination. As a man of thought, he saw through the madness of modernity, and offered an alternative vision that combined the best insights of both the pre-modern and modern world-views while avoiding the self-indulgent individualism and moral complacency of the currently fashionable post-modernism. He also discovered a uniquely moral method of political change in the form of *satyagraha*, and provided an effective alternative to violence. As a man of action he led the greatest anti-colonial struggle in history, encouraged a humane and liberal form of patriotism, showed how to lead a successful political life without compromising one's integrity, and offered a rare example of morally responsible leadership.

2.6 KEY WORDS

Purushartha: *Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha* are pursued to find meaning or purpose in our life.

Holistic Vision: seeks comprehensive understanding aimed at reconciling some of the apparent contradictions.

2.7 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

Basham, A. L. "Traditional Influence on the Thought of Mahatma Gandhi." Ravinder Kumar. Ed. In *Essays on Gandhian politics of Rowlett Satyagraha.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.

Eliade, M. "Purushararthas." *Encyclopedia of Religion.* 16 Vols. New York: Macmillan, 1987.

Gandhi, M.K. *Hind Swaraj.* Ahmedabad: The Navajivan Trust, 1938.

_______________. *The Essential writings*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2008.

______________. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi.* 100 Vols. New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India. 1958–1994.

Iyer, Raghavan. Ed. *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi. 3 vols*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1987.

Parekh, Bhiku. *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform: An Analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1989.

____________. *Gandhi's Political Philosophy: A Critical Examination* London: Macmillan, 1989.

Shah, K. J. "*Purushartha* and Gandhi." in R. Roy. Ed. *Gandhi and the Present Global Crisis*. Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1996.

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

UNIT 3 SOCIAL EGALITARIANISM AND GANDHI

Contents

3.0 Objectives
3.1 Introduction
3.2 Gandhi and the problem of Untouchability
3.3 Empowerment of Women
3.4 *Sarvodaya*
3.5 Secularism and Religion
3.6 Let Us Sum Up
3.7 Key Words
3.8 References and Further Readings

3.0 OBJECTIVES

Egalitarianism is a belief that favors equality of some sort. Its general premise is that people should be treated as equals on certain dimensions such as race, religion, ethnicity, political affiliation, economic status, social status, and cultural heritage. Egalitarian doctrines maintain that all humans are equal in fundamental worth and all people should have the same rights. The Unit discusses Gandhi's concerns as an ardent social reformer committed to such egalitarian vision of the society. He was very much against social injustices, tyrannies and oppressions. He fought against the evils of racism, imperialism, communalism, gender injustice, communalism and social segregation. His ideas on equality continue to generate interest among the admirers as well as critics. The Unit examines his efforts especially in the areas of annihilating untouchability, empowerment of women, the principle of *Sarvodaya* and diversity and dialogue between religions.

Thus by the end of this Unit you should be able:

- to have a basic understanding of Gandhian idea of social equality;
- to appreciate his ideas on complex social issues like caste, gender and *sarvodaya*;
- to understand his nuanced position on religion.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Gandhi's genius as a social reformer lay in his intuitive ability to fuse timeless principles with evolving strategies. Throughout his life, Gandhi gradually shifted the emphasis of his political endeavours from non-violent resistance to constructive schemes for the social good. For him, non-violent resistance *(satyagraha)* and *sarvodaya* were logical corollaries of the same philosophical perspective. Non-violent resistance, however, aimed to set right entrenched abuses or to abolish some patently unfair laws or practices. But persisting non-cooperation with perceived evils cannot by itself create a egalitarain society. He believed that everybody must earn his bread with the sweat of his brow. This was the crux of his theory of 'bread labour'. His concept of egalitarianism was centred on the preservation of human dignity rather than material development. He visualised a society based on the principles of non-violence and truth. His ideal social order was not a sort of platonic myth of ‘Republic’. He built strong bridges between theory and practice. His goal of life was to live in a non-exploitive society. His ‘*Hind Swaraj*’ was anchored on trusteeship and anti-machine and technology that displace men from livelihoods. He exploited indigenous (*swadeshi*) resources and shunned foreign goods. He emphasised on the purity of end and means. He respected diversities and pluralities. According to him, religion and politics are inseparable, whereas politics is inspired by morality and spirituality. His experiments with truth are aimed at a new moral and societal order.

3.2 GANDHI AND THE PROBLEM OF UNTOUCHABILITY

Untouchability in India, as the race and colour problems in the West, rested upon the idea of the superiority of one section of people over another on account of their birth. Eradication of untouchability was one of the central concerns of Gandhi. The disease of untouchability permeated in our society was seriously diagnosed at various levels by Gandhi and his numerous associates dedicated to the cause of eradication of this evil. The long-drawn struggle for more than three decades had initial difficulties on account of serious opposition from orthodox Hindus. The customs of treating untouchables by our society had greatly lowered their social status. Their dwellings were outside the villages and were not permitted to use public tanks, ponds, wells and other places. The very 'touch' of an untouchable was hateful. Untouchability, in practice, has been almost a total negation of fundamental rights as well as of all criteria of civilized and decent existence. It may appear shocking to people to imagine that in many parts of India, some decades back, a higher caste Hindu could touch a cow, a goat, a dog and a cat without being contaminated but the touch of a human being of the untouchable community could pollute him.

Gandhi fought against these social practices and advised the status-conscious people to behave in a decent way towards untouchables. He opened schools for them, afforded them an honourable place in his Ashram, fought for their temple entry at numerous places, lived amongst them and participated in their social and religious functions. In a society like ours, where religion and social status play dominant role, Gandhi found numerous obstacles in his mission. But his practical examples were eye-opener to millions of people who still did not wish to come out of the dilemma of religious thoughts. His efforts, however, paved the way for promoting their cause and afforded them a social status which was somewhat improved than what was in the past.

Gandhi sought to revolutionize the entire Hindu society. For him, the interdependence of Dalit and Hindu society is crucial. The two societies are organically linked with each other. He uses this as a knife that cuts both ways. There is no point in changing 'myself', excluding the 'other'. The 'other' also should experience a process of change. The inseparability of 'the self' and the 'other', which was the philosophical mainstay of the *Bhakti* movement, was invested by Gandhi with a new kind of radical militancy. The upper caste liberals romanticise the poor and the untouchables. For them, guilt is the only authentic emotion vis a vis untouchability. Gandhi transformed the notion of historical guilt into a concrete model of action for the present. He sought to convince and convert the caste Hindus and mobilise their energies by means of moral and religious appeals. He aimed to awaken them to the moral enormity of untouchability and to inspire them both individually and collectively to do all in their power to eradicate it. He encouraged them to undertake welfare activities among the untouchables in a spirit of remorse and guilt. He thought that this would have desirable effects on both. It would 'cleanse' the caste Hindus, redeem their guilt and draw them physically, morally and emotionally closer to the untouchables. It would also give the latter a measure of pride and dignity, increase their self-confidence and improve their habits and ways of life, thereby removing some of the causes of caste Hindu prejudices against them

He shocked the Hindu orthodoxy by his repeated declaration that untouchability was not a vital part of Hinduism, but was, as he used to say, only an excrescence and a plague. He claimed to be the devout follower of the spiritual and moral teachings of the Hindu scriptures. He refused to accept any interpretation of the religious scriptures including even the *Vedas* if it conflicted with the commands of conscience. Even if a religious and scriptural source would be quoted in support of untouchability he would brush it aside as an interpolation. Thus in his own gentle but terrifically powerful way, Gandhi tried to demolish the religious foundation of untouchability. By so doing not only did he bring the criteria of conscience and right reason to bear their impact on this institution but he damaged its centuries old scriptural support. Untouchability in its extreme form always caused him so much pain, because he considered himself to be a Hindu.

Gandhi maintained that in Hinduism there was no sanction for treating a single human being as untouchable. The *Bhagavad Gita* has never taught that a c*handala* was in any way inferior to a *Brahmana*. He regarded himself a *Sanatan* Hindu, because he obeyed the eternal precepts of the faith as embodied in the *Shastras* as he understood them. He had no doubt that there are many interpolations in the *Smritis* and the other scriptural books. He rejected as interpolations everything in the *Smritis* or other writings that was inconsistent with Truth and Non-violence or other fundamental and universal principles of ethics. He argued that the "idea of superiority and inferiority is repugnant to the most elementary principles of morality. A *Brahmana* who considers himself superior to any single creature of God ceases to be a *Brahmana*. If we are children of the same God, how can there be any rank among us? .... What will happen to the body, if these members begin to quarrel about rank? .... The verses in the *Smritis* about *Sudras* deserve to be summarily rejected as being contrary to the spirit of humanity." (Gandhi, M. K., September 1934)

He felt that if religious equality was provided to the Dalits, their political and economic conditions would quickly improve. His view of the problem of untouchability is basically a religious and spiritual one. He refused to recognise any separate entity for the untouchables. As an advocate of the Varna system, he wanted only four divisions. He did want the untouchables to have "all the rights common to the four Varnas." It must be reiterated here that in the Gandhian scheme, the four divisions did not signify any sense of superiority or domination, but were simply functional divisions.

Gandhi remarked, "Hinduism has sinned in giving sanction to Untouchability. It has degraded us, made us pariahs." He argued, that the *shastras* "cannot be above reason and morality." He also said, " ... if it is proved to me that it is an essential part of Hinduism I for one would declare myself an open rebel against Hinduism itself." (Fischer, L., 1997. p.185)

Gandhi believed that *varnashrama* and the caste system in ancient India had a constructive role to play. It helped to integrate the different ethnic groups under Hindu society. Further, it gave rise to a practicable system of social division of labour. But subsequently the caste system became oppressive and exploitative. This is where Gandhi brings his modern ideas of truth, justice, equality dignity of the individual etc., to the very corpus of traditional values. In view of this he urges people to see or to realize the inhuman and irrational nature of caste system. Gandhi is convinced that unless people realize this, untouchability cannot be removed by force or law.

Gandhi-Ambedkar Controversy

A few words are in order regarding the very important Gandhi-Ambedkar discussion on the issue of caste and untouchability; their difference of opinions and the mutual influence on each other. Gandhi and Ambedkar looked at the problem of untouchability from two very different perspectives. Gandhi had a very keen sense of justice and human dignity, but it was conditioned by his religious convictions. Ambedkar's views were shaped by personal experience of the inequities of the caste system; he had personally suffered the humiliations and insults meted out to an untouchable by a caste ridden society.

Gandhi's take-off point was that the problem of untouchability was a problem of the self, in this case the collective Hindu self. He had transformed the notion of individual self and the necessity of clearing the cobwebs of the caste ego was shifted to the level of the larger notion of the collective self. But he maintained the importance of internalizing these values at the personal level too. The Untouchable is a part of the Self. He saw the movement to eradicate untouchability as a sacred ritual of self-purification. He discredited and undermined the intellectual and moral basis of untouchability, but he did not concentrate on its social, economic and political roots. Ambedkar has defined the problem in terms of building an independent political identity for Dalits in the structures of social, economic, and political powers, whereas for Gandhi it was purely a religious question, that too an internal one for Hinduism.

D R Nagaraj in his article “Self-purification versus Self-respect” argued that while Ambedkar and Gandhi were political adversaries, in the India of today we need both. We need Ambedkar to remind ourselves that while criticism and even anger are sometimes necessary, so are action and reconstruction. Both Ambedkar and Gandhi were not the same persons they were when they had set out on a journey of profound engagement with each other. They were deeply affected and transformed by each other.

Ambedkar and Gandhi transformed each other. The latter extended the very scope and definition of the dalit cause. It was no more a question of mere untouchability. It had become a larger holistic understanding of the untouchables. Because of the debate between them both had changed their emphasis, to put it crudely, Gandhi had taken over economics from Ambedkar, Ambedkar had internalized the importance of religion. Both Gandhi and Ambedkar can and should be made complementary to each other.

3.3. EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Gandhi respected traditions of the society, but not at the cost of loss of individual dignity. He never hesitated to criticize the evils which had gripped the Indian society, and tried to mobilize public opinion against such evils. He realised that there were deep-rooted customs hampering the development of women, and women's freedom from such shackles was necessary for the emancipation of the nation. He assumed a pioneering role in attempting to eradicate the social wrongs committed against the women of the country through ages. When Gandhi emerged on to the political scenario, social evils like child marriage and dowry system were rampant. The percentage of women with basic education was as low as two percent. The patriarchal nature of the society confined women to the status of an inferior sex subordinate to their male counterparts. The *purdah* system was in full vogue in Northern India. Unless accompanied by their male guardians, the women were not permitted to venture out on their own. Only a handful few could avail of education and attend schools. It was in such a dismal milieu that Gandhi took the responsibility of shouldering a social crusade that led to a major reorientation of the common notion of women in the Indian society.

According to Gandhi, social reforms were essential for the restructuring of the societal values that had so far dominated the perception of Indian women. He realized that certain customs and traditions of the Indian society were antithetical to the spirit of development of the women of the nation. His practical and dynamic advice was, "It is good to swim in the waters of tradition, but to sink in them is suicide". The system of *purdah* came under Gandhi's attacks and he questioned the very foundation of this practice. For him, the *purdah* system was no less than a "vicious, brutal and barbarous" practice. The predicaments of the *devadasis*, a part of the lower, untouchable segment of the society, had an indelible effect on the sensitive mind of the Gandhi. The pathetic conditions of the child prostitutes disturbed him immensely. He left no stone unturned for rehabilitating this segment of the society, as for him guarding the honour of women was no less than protecting cows. According to Gandhi, one of the first tasks that need to be accomplished as soon as the country won freedom was to abolish the system of *devadasis*. Gandhi throughout his life waged a crusade for the upliftment of the socially downtrodden, making significant contributions for the enhancement of the status of women in India. Women under his aegis, took a milestone step towards re-establishing their identity in the society. Gandhi's inspiring ideologies boosted their morale and helped them to rediscover their self esteem.

With the emergence of Gandhian Philosophy, a new conception of women gradually gained currency. For Gandhi, women were not mere toys in the hands of men, neither their competitors. Men and women are essentially endowed with the same spirit and therefore have similar problems. Women are at par with men, one complementing the other. According to Gandhi, education for women was the need of the time that would ensure their moral development and make them capable of occupying the same platform as that of men. In Gandhi's views, women can never be considered to be the weaker sex. In Gandhi's words, "To call women the weaker sex is a libel; it is man's injustice to women." In fact, women for Gandhi were embodiments of virtues like knowledge, humility, tolerance, sacrifice and faith. These qualities were essential prerequisites for imbibing the virtue of *Satyagraha*. The capability of enduring endless suffering can be witnessed only in the women, according to the *Mahatma*. The doctrine of *ahimsa* as preached by Gandhi incorporates the virtue of suffering as is evident in the women. Therefore, Gandhi envisaged a critical role for women in establishing non-violence. Gandhi invoked the instances of ancient role models who were epitomes of Indian womanhood, like *Draupadi, Savitri, Sita* and *Damayanti*, to show that Indian women could never be feeble. Women have equal mental abilities as that of men and equal right to freedom. To sum up in Gandhi's words; "The wife is not the husband's slave but his companion and his help-mate and an equal partner in all his joys and sorrows - as free as the husband to choose her own path." Gandhi's reformist spirit seasoned the role that he played in uplifting the status of women in India.

In order to improve the condition of women and to carry out the social reforms effectively, social reformers felt the need for providing education to girls. Gandhi strongly criticized "excessive subordination" of the women to the men. Education, though is the key to progress in women's rights, has been sadly neglected. Tradition and custom played important parts in determining women's position in the social life. Women are deprived of equal status both in opportunities and also under law. Gandhi called upon women to join national movement with the idea that there can be no national awakening without the awakening of women. He was of the view that once the women of India were awakened, national awakening would not be delayed.

Gandhi had great faith in the Indian women about their potentialities. Women in India have suffered from numerous oppressive social customs, traditions, laws, and values, norms and deprivations that are sanctioned by various religious scriptures besides being a part of everyday essential life. Even today, an overwhelming majority of them are suppressed because of being women. From the final *non-violence* campaign in South Africa in 1913 until his death in 1948, Gandhi was supported, and was inspired by and also inspired women to a degree incomparable in Indian history. Gandhi brought women to the frontline of the national fight. Never before in Indian history women joyfully participated in public activities as they did under the charismatic call of Gandhi

In various *ashrams* and other educational and social work organizations including *Sewa Ashram, Sabaramati Ashram, Hitakarini Sabha* carried on Gandhian lines, where the women's various social problems were discussed. Girls and women were treated on par with boys and men and were paid equal attention. Gandhi was keen that women should be given equal responsibilities as men not only in the national struggle but also in the building up of the nation. Gandhi observed that the general condition of women in India was distressing due to several oppressive social practices, values, norms and laws. Their condition was miserable both in the public and private sphere, i.e. in the family as well as in the society.

Not only there was a general awakening among the women, but under Gandhi's leadership, they entered into the national mainstream, taking parts in the National Movements. According to Gandhi, the role of women in the political, economic and social emancipation of the country was of overriding importance. Gandhi had immense faith in the capability of women to carry on a non violent crusade. Under his guidance and leadership, women shouldered critical responsibilities in India's struggle for freedom. Gandhi's urge to women to join India's struggle for independence was instrumental in transforming the outlook of women. *Swaraj* uprooted age old taboos and restrictive customs. Through their participation in Indian struggle for freedom, women of India broke down the shackles of oppression that had relegated them to a secondary position from time immemorial.

Gandhi made women into a subject, making her realize that she had freedom, qualities and attributes which are crucial to contemporary society. In a radical reconstruction, he gave her confidence in herself and in her essence. He made woman realize that she has a significant and a dominant role to play in the family, that both she and her husband are equal, and that within the family they both have similar rights. In a path-breaking intervention, he made it possible not only the involvement of women in politics, but made them realize that the national movement could not succeed without their involvement in the struggle. Gandhi ultimately empowered woman in the family and in marriage.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) How did Gandhi attack the problem of Untouchability?

…………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………….

2) What is the role played by Gandhi towards empowering women?

…………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

3.4 SECULARISM AND RELIGION

Religion as an Idea and as an Institution:

Gandhi used the word religion in two different senses: one in its denominational or sectarian sense, that is, in terms of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, etc., and the other in the traditional Indian sense of Dharma, that is, the moral code which guides a person's life and the social order. Religion as an idea is timeless whereas religion as an institution is time-bound. Without the Institutional religions the idea of religion would not find actual expression in time and place; without the idea of religion, institutional religions would lack the specifically religious element in them.

Many people criticized Gandhi for mixing religion and politics, however, these critics did not fully understand what Gandhi meant by religion. There can be no religion devoid of morality. A pure life, unruffled by passions and prejudices, is an essential prerequisite for religious experience. He emphasized that the institutional religion, or religion in its organized, denominational form, not as Dharma or a code of morality, but in the form of Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, etc. should be kept separate and that religion should be treated as a private or personal concern of the individual.

Secularism

Gandhi had a modern understanding of secularism. According to him, religion should not intrude into politics; there should be separation of religion from politics, economy, education and large areas of social life and culture. In a multi-religious society, secularism also means the state should show equal regard for all faiths including atheism. Secularism has emerged as a uniting force of Indian people against colonialism and also meant an opposition to communalism.

He was not bothered by the western idea of separation of church and state. He felt, in India religion is so powerful in the social order that the western concept of secularism did not make sense in the geo-cultural context. In deviance to the western concept of secularism, he suggested *Sarvadhrama Samabhava,* to prevent conflicts caused by religious bigotry. He believed that God is ethics and morality. He had deduced a simple but significant logic: people lived by a set of beliefs whether they are rooted in atheism, secularism or spiritualism and these need to be accommodated in secular polity. He opens up the avenues of interreligious understanding and of a spiritually justified limitation of the role of religious institutions and symbols in certain areas of contemporary life. Inter-religious harmony can be secured without requiring the people to become irreligious or anti-religious.

His idea of secularism is informed with a sense of history, tradition and is sensitive to religion. There is a scope for inclusion and accommodation in his characterization and it is normatively different from the received understanding from the West. He believed that religion and the state are inseparable, that irreligiosity encouraged by the state leads to demoralization of the people and that, therefore, the state's religious policy should be pluralistic with equal respect to all religions.

Gandhi pioneered a way of moral-political experimentation in which the relative autonomy (or, in other words, the non-absolute separation) of religion and politics from each other is used for the reconstruction of both the religious traditions and the modern state. The reformist intervention of the modern democratic state in the socio-religious sphere had to have as its complementary side some form of moral-political intervention for transforming the modern state by integrating its institutions and practices with the principles of *satya* and *ahimsa*.

While resisting religious fundamentalism, he is also skeptical about the hyper-secularism of the Western type. Some of the characteristics which are unique can be identified in his alternative are: He is committed to the idea of principled distance between religion and state which is different from one-sided exclusion or mutual exclusion or strict neutrality. He has conceptual space for community specific political rights- the right of religious communities to establish and maintain institutions for the survival and sustenance of their religious traditions. His idea of secularism entails a conceptual distinction between depublicization and depoliticization -not hostile to the public presence of religion but does not aim to de-publicize it. He is concerned as much with inter-religious as well as intra-religious domination. He combines active hostility to some aspects of religion (a ban on untouchability) with active respect for other dimensions as he believes religion has multiple values. His vision combines critique of the religion with respect consistently.

Pluralism and Co-existence of Religions

Religious Pluralism means in principle all institutional religions are legitimate. Gandhi believes all religions have their origin in divine revelation. The one true religion subsequently became many "as it passed through human medium". In other words, God had revealed himself to the humanity at the same time humanity expressed the meaning of the received revelation differently, depending on language and culture. The unities of religious truths are guaranteed because of their divine sources but their diversity becomes unavoidable. Diverse philosophical and theosophical systems, dogmas, cults and codes reflect this diversity. He used number of metaphors to convey the ideas of religious pluralism: that all institutional religions were roads that led to the same destination; they were the branches of the same tree. Further, he believed that there is a core and a periphery to all religions. The core reflects the eternal essence which is by and large common across all faiths.

Religious Pluralism provides objective basis for religious toleration within the state and also supplies the foundation for the dialogue between religions. Since all religions have a common origin, humans had a moral obligation to respect them. The Gujarati term he uses for toleration was *Sahishnuta*, which is a more positive term than toleration. It means respect and sympathy for religions different from one's own, whereas toleration can imply an assumption of inferiority of the other. He was convinced that the future of peace between religions lay in the dialogue between religious. Dialogue was not a process of superimposing one's own religious views on the other but of understanding the other as a different religious being. To have a genuine dialogue, the participants had to maintain their own identities and beliefs. In a dialogue, one speaks from one's position. One need not hope to discover what one's position would be at the end of the dialogue, but one has to have a position grounded in truth. Such being the case dialogue can become an exercise in joint search for truth, tolerance being only means to truth. The outcome of such openness would not be the fusion or the uniting of the religions concerned but it would enable an orthodox Hindu to remain what he was and to yet to respect an orthodox Muslim. The outcome would be towards assimilation as much as possible, of the truths that were in the religion of the other. This would lead towards harmony and peace between diverse beliefs, faiths and communities.

3.5 SARVODAYA

Gandhi lived in an age of colonialism and imperialism. During his life span, two world wars were fought causing great devastation, and threatening human existence and civilization. In his own country he witnessed poverty, hunger, destitution and deprivation of millions along with many social evils. In such a scenario he was very much skeptical of the prevailing political and economic ideologies to fare better for a peaceful world. His primary concern was to build a non-violent, peaceful and progressive society with a humanistic agenda; under the above historical compulsion he imagined a socio-economic alternative with the greatest stress on moral elevation. Gandhi visualizes an integral development in society through *Sarvodaya*. It consists of the welfare of all beings. It is a spiritual and moral approach to the problems of mankind. As Gandhi claims, it is not a new approach that he is offering; it is on the other hand rooted in the ancient Indian thinking. It is not only stand for the welfare of all but visualizes a world order based on equality. The merger of one in all is based on self-sacrifice and selfless service.

The greatest good for all living beings is the goal of *Sarvodaya*. While rejecting the principles of the greatest good of the greatest number, it upholds the maximum welfare of every individual on the basis of sharing goods and services regardless of one’s own contribution. By providing sufficient opportunities to every individual for their personal initiatives and capacities *Sarvodaya* aims at the total and integral development of every individual in the human society. Gandhi states: “I want to save time and labour, not for a section of mankind, but for all; I want the concentration of wealth not in the hands of a few, but in the hands of all.” No individual or group will be left out suppressed in the *Sarvodaya* society. Gandhi firmly believed that the individual has to work for the welfare of all. There is no growth of the individual without the growth of the society and vice-versa. Both are inter-related. Further he advocates economic equality in the sense that both intellectual work and bodily work are equal in status. He also advocates dignity of labor.

Gandhi firmly believed that economic equality is the master key to removal of conflict. Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour. It means leveling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth, on the one hand; and the leveling up of the semi starved naked millions, on the other. A nonviolent system of government is clearly an impossibility so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists. *Sarvodaya* then is the application of the principle of nonviolence in the transformation of societies: from their present forms which are mostly exploitative and disfavour the most disadvantaged, towards more balanced, inclusive and equalitarian forms in which there is Social Justice for All. Thus Gandhian concept of *Sarvodaya* advocates a casteless society in the social realm, in politics it shares a democratic vision of the power of the people, in economics it promotes the belief that small is beautiful and in religion it asks for tolerance for all faiths and its final goal is to promote peace for all mankind.

Trusteeship

Gandhi evolved the theory of trusteeship not only on his deep religious conviction that everything belongs to God and therefore, a human being can hold either his property or talent only as a trustee, but also on a number of practical considerations. He knew that to dispossess the men of property or of talent by force was bound to involve class war, hatred, proletarian dictatorship, an all powerful and coercive State, and the consequent elimination of all hope of creating a non-violent society. He also felt that many men who had acquired property had some special abilities for increasing production and many men of talent had exceptional contributions to make, and, therefore, to destroy them by force, may lead to much less of production and would be like killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. Hence his emphasis on persuading them to function as trustees rather than dispossessing them, by force, of their income or wealth. At the same time, knowing human nature as he did, he knew that mere persuasion may not be enough. He, therefore, conveyed the warning that the alternative to their being amenable to persuasion would be the triumph of forces that would dispossess them by violence. At the same time, he reminded both tenants and workers that their exploitation was possible only because of their failure to recognise their own strength and the consequent passive acceptance of their exploitation. He wanted the poor to know that the rich cannot accumulate wealth without the co-operation of the poor in society; and he recommended non-violent non-co-operation and civil disobedience as the right and infallible means for getting the rich to change their attitude and become trustees in the public interest instead of continuing as exploiters. He was prepared to advocate the implementation of ameliorative measures through the legislative channel, give trusteeship a statutory form, and make it a legalised institution. Appeal to the better instincts in the rich, persuasion, education regarding the inevitability of change and the greater unattractiveness of the alternative of change by violence, non-violent, non-co-operation by the exploited that would make the exploiter's functioning impossible, and finally legislative action were the series of measures that he contemplated for his programme in bringing about the change that he desired in property relations and the use of personal talents in the public interest.

Gandhi also claimed for his socialism of *Sarvodaya* and Trusteeship the ability to survive on a self-sustaining and permanent basis which, he held, was not possible in the case of the socialism or communism of the Marxian conception. This was not only because the latter used violence as its means but also because socialism through violence only destroyed possession. According to Gandhi, nothing secured by violence could survive on a permanent basis.

The theory of trusteeship, elimination of exploitation in every shape or form; a classless society which offers no privileges by the birth or wealth or talent; mutual cooperation being the driving force of motivation and behavior; and above all, securing the welfare of all without any distinction of race, religion, sex, political affiliation: these may be said to be the highlights of the *Sarvodaya* society envisioned by Gandhi. Further human values, individual development that's always consistent with its use for the development of society; promotion of altruism to the highest degree; integration of the individual with society; lifting the whole human society to the highest level of existence where love and fair play will have the most crucial roles to play; these are the most predominant characteristics of the *Sarvodaya* ideal. *Sarvodaya* then is the application of the principle of nonviolence in the transformation of societies: from their present forms which are mostly exploitative and disfavour the most disadvantaged, toward more balanced, inclusive and equalitarian forms.

Trusteeship as a viable revolutionary force can be seen in the *Bhoodan- Gramdan* Movement initiated by Vinoba Bhave during 1950s. Bhave relentlessly pursued voluntary contributions from all land owners whether of wealthy or moderate means to be redistributed to the landless. Bhave was once criticized for accepting a land donation from someone who had barely enough to sustain his family. The man donated it to the village elders to redistribute to the landless. Bhave commented that such an act shows that the spirit of sacrifice has no limits. He pointed out that such acts inspire gratitude on the part of those receiving the gift and shame those who are reluctant to share.

Sarvodaya makes it absolutely clear that *Swaraj* cannot be identified only with economic prosperity and political power. As Gandhi thinks even if India gets free and achieves economic prosperity it would still not a real *Swaraj*. Real *Swaraj*, for Gandhi, means not only political power and economic prosperity but more importantly it means a certain moral development among people. A man who is having a moral life can alone have this attitude. He is the man, as he puts it, "does not cheat anyone, does not forsake truth and does his duty."

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) In Gandhian framework, what is the relationship between religion and state?

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………….

2) How Trusteeship contributes to egalitarian ideals?

……………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………...

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

3.6 LET US SUM UP

We have looked at the views of Gandhi on various unjust aspects of society and examined his efforts regarding some of the aspects. Gandhi believed in egalitarian ideals of a society which has basic economic, social and political equity as ingredients and supported a fundamental equality amongst all citizens. He doubted that the centralized state could serve these ends unless it had actually arisen from a people already dedicated to them. The social transformation of a nation could not be achieved in purely social terms, if for no other reason than that social action and political authority cannot be wholly disentangled. Gandhi was deeply convinced that political power could be brought to bear on institutionalized practices which subvert social and economic ends, but just as his radical ideas of social and economic reform require that these arenas be purified and understood in a new light, politics too must be purified and understood anew.

3.7. KEY WORDS

Varnas: Four divisions of traditional Hindu society.

Sarvodaya: It means welfare of all beings, 'good of all', 'service to all' and 'welfare of all'.

Trusteeship: Human beings holding their property or talent only as a trustee.

3.8 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

Ambedkar, B. R. *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables?* Bombay: Thacker and Co., 1946.

Brown, M.J. *Gandhi: The Prisoner of Hope.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Fischer, L. *The Essential Gandhi,* New York: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1963.

Fischer, L. *The Life of Mahatma* Gandhi. New York: Harper Collins Publications, 1997.

Gandhi, M. K. *Dalit*. September 1934.

Gandhi, M. K. *Removal of Untouchability.* Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press, 1959.

Joshi, P. Ed. *Gandhi on Women, Collection of Mahatma Gandhi's Writings and Speeches on Women.* Ahmedabad*:* Navajivan Publishing House, 1988.

Kher .V. Ed. *Social Service Work and Reform.* Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1976.

Kriplani, J. B. *Gandhi: His Life and Thought.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Nagaraj D.R. "Self-purification versus Self –respect." in Raghurama Raju. A. Ed. *Debating Gandhi*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Narayan, J. P. *Socialism, Sarvodaya, and Communism.* Bombay: Anamika Prakashan, 1964.

Richard, Glyn. *The Philosophy of Gandhi: A Study of his Basic Ideas*. London: Routledge 1995.

Tendulkar, D.G. *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.* Delhi: Publication Division, Vol. VII. 1969.

UNIT 4 TOWARDS PEACE AND HARMONY

Contents

4.0 Objectives
4.1 Introduction
4.2 Gandhi and World Peace
4.3 Tolerance in Gandhism
4.4 Peace Education
4.5 Let Us Sum Up
4.6 Key Words
4.7 References and Further Readings

4.0 OBJECTIVES

Gandhian thought and technique acquired universal appeal. Having forged the new weapon of non-violent non-cooperation he chalked out a new path not only for India but for the world as a whole. He always attempted a synthesis between theory and practice, between thought and work. For him a thought or theory had no meaning unless it was translated into practice.

The world has reached the cross-roads of history. Innumerable issues have cropped up posing a grave challenge to humankind. These issues are global in their dimensions and nature. Hardly any of them is amenable to violent means. They need to be faced on a long term basis with international cooperation. No nation, howsoever powerful, is in a position to grapple with them. Nations are tied together in an inter-dependent framework. We have to band together otherwise each one will have to hang separately. There is no escape from the relentless logic of our commonality. This will be in tune with the humanistic and holistic approach that Gandhi so well espoused. Ever active, Gandhi believed that silence and inactivity in the face of injustice amounted to cowardice and escapism. All instances of injustice have to be opposed. His technique of Satyagraha singled him out as a great fighter. Freedom, justice and equality were the ends he had in mind. He wanted to recreate a peaceful society as a just social order. But Satyagraha was to be carried out with non-violence. It was a technique of non-violent resolution of conflict. The Unit attempts to capture his vision of a non-violent peaceful and harmonious world.

Thus by the end of this Unit you should be able:

- to have an understanding of Gandhian vision of peaceful world;
- to appreciate the moral dimension he brings forth in resolving conflicts.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Gandhi approach to non-violence places him as a farsighted, sensitive and perceptive man of peace. Modern peace researchers who have contributed to the idea of direct and indirect violence and particularly structural violence find Gandhi as an equally original contributor to the thinking of peace research. The concept of structural violence is a product of social relationships of exploitation. Viewed from this angle, the control exercised by an imperial power is a classic case of structural violence, the British domination over India being one of them. The fight that Gandhi carried on against it was a non-violent fight against violence.

He shares with many others the goal of a decent, just and equitable society. He wants to see an end to injustice, tyranny, corruption, and the exploitation of men by their fellows. With others he is deeply concerned to establish peace in the world, but not a peace purchased at any price. He knows that the only peace that can endure and be worthy of the name is based on justice.

A believer in peace is not content with the *status quo.* He is sensitive to the poverty, the distress, and the abject misery in which millions of his fellowmen live, not only in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. He realizes that, although overt violence comes vividly to the fore when desperate people take a situation into their own hands and blood runs in the streets, violence is in fact the daily lot of a staggering number of people.

All over the world most people think that only two reactions are possible in the face of tyranny, aggression or injustice. Men and women can either use violent methods, can kill, torture, or engage in sabotage, or they can be cowardly and surrender. When it is suggested that without recourse to violence strong and forthright resistance may be offered, many people simply fail to see this as a third alternative. Instead they equate it with the second, still thinking of nonviolent resistance as the equivalent of surrender.

The pacifist, however, strives to be closer in spirit to the soldier than to the coward, and sees far more of courage than of cowardice in the lives of such practitioners of nonviolence as Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave, Martin Luther King and Abbe Pierre. Such men reject violence because of a deeply held conviction that the employment of violence leads men and nations away from the decent society which is their goal. Wars fought to end war, though calling forth tremendous courage and immeasurable sacrifice, have led to more rather than to less war, nor have they made the world safe for freedom and democracy.

The task is to ensure harmony and peace in this strife-torn world. The ball is in the court of the Gandhians and all social groups which stand for peace and harmony and above all — responsible leaders of different streams of society. Both, leaders from polity and civil society, have a tremendous responsibility in setting up an agenda for peace and harmony. This agenda should take its cue from Gandhi's doctrines of Truth and Nonviolence.

4.2 GANDHI AND WORLD PEACE

Gandhi in all his undertakings proved himself to be one of the greatest messengers of peace the world has witnessed and peace becomes the quintessence of his political philosophy. It is Gandhi's contributions to world peace that the world at large has aptly recognized in him. Gandhi showed the world not only the goal of peace but the supreme method of achieving world peace. George C. Mashall writes, “In his devotion to peace and tolerance of the brotherhood man, the Mahatma was one those rare spokesman for the conscience of all mankind”. Peace and tolerance, for Gandhi, were the supreme means for the realisation of Truth and Love which were identical to the Ultimate End of man. Gandhi’s spiritual, political, and economic tenets were permeated by the principle of peace. In the light of peace alone could the human being witness truth.

Gandhi developed his world-view against the background of a world of violence. Violence by the foreign rule, economic violence against the poor, political violence against the down-trodden and underprivileged, educational violence against the illiterate and the backward and above all the violence of war and crime. Gandhi’s message of peace took all its sharpness and sensitivity against this background of violence. He says, “What you gain by violence will be lost by greater violence”. Gandhi recognized violence as the root-cause of all evils and all evils are thus reducible to violence against the spirit of truth. Hence for him non-violence or *ahimsa* becomes the only path to truth and only solution to the problems of life- individual, social and national. Hence the great role of *ahimsa* in the framework of Gandhian thoughts. Thus non-violence becomes the identified with peace. Peace becomes the true and positive way to the realization of truth.

Peace is an active and dynamic state in which one gets the opportunity to move forward towards development without confusion, fear or worry. On the other hand conflicts, disputes, dissensions, fights or struggles are illustrative of the absence of peace. Undoubtedly, harmony, cooperation and love emerge as chief characteristics of the state of peace. Despite several negative human tendencies, efforts for progress are desired by all since advancement at all levels and in all walks of life is a prime necessity of human life. In other words, it is a part and parcel of human endeavours. Hence, through the ages man has made constant efforts to gain peace either by individual or by collective means. This state remains intact today and will be so in the times to come.

Before proceeding further one more thing should be clarified. Peace is a dynamic state and not a situation of the status quo. Furthermore, it has nothing to do with inactiveness. In a state of peace, man accepting the reality of *Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam*, and freeing himself from the state of confusion, fear, tension, conflict, struggle or war, through harmony and cooperation of others in society continuously work to ensure welfare of humanity. Peace is also the best means to progress. Hence, it can be asserted that through the ages efforts for peace have been made individually or collectively and for this the method of non-cooperation has also been adopted from time-to-time. Today, because of the unprecedented scale of globalization, the importance and the need for such an effort multiplies many folds, more than in the past.

As we know, the Gandhian view in general pertains to the welfare of the human world. Moreover, Mahatma Gandhi carried out his practices accordingly. Whatever he preached he practiced them to clearly illustrate to the world that his life itself was his message. Therefore, it is necessary to take his ideas and practices together while discussing or analyzing his views. We can categorically say that Gandhian approach or view can be comprehended in real sense only if his ideas and practices are both put together in perspective.

ignou THE PEOPLE’S UNIVERSITY

Firstly, the basis or the centre of Gandhian view is *Ahimsa* [non-violence] as the highest human value. *Ahimsa* is a natural and eternal value. Besides being the essential condition for the existence *Ahimsa* is the means of development and achieving the goal of life. All high human values, including morality, at the centre of this discussion, originate from *Ahimsa*. Furthermore, *Ahimsa* itself is also the protector of all human values and the basis of ethics. Therefore, thousands of years ago, *Ahimsa* was declared as the *Parmodharma* by the Vedic-Hindu philosophy and it was also accepted as the *Parmabrahaman* by Jainism. Hence, *Ahimsa* is interpreted as the basis of the supreme moral law. It is the foundation of universal principles and also its leading force. It is an eternal law or the rule. To repeat, *Ahimsa* is the essential condition for existence and continuity. This fact is emphasized by Martin Luther King Junior who underlined the non-violent philosophy of the Mahatma many a time. For example he said, “I found in the non-violent resistance philosophy of Gandhi... the only morally and practically sound method open to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom.”

Secondly, Gandhian view admits the reality of differences, disputes, conflicts and struggles, and their impact on various walks of human life. It accepts cooperation and struggle both as the necessities of society. But, at the same time it is determined to settle or resolve all states of violence by adopting *Ahimsa* in its refined form as per the demand of time and space. Thus, admitting the reality of the law of change Gandhism calls for resolution and solution of each and every struggle and dispute through the value of *Ahimsa*. In comparison to other available methods of conflict resolution Gandhism has a certain distinct and striking sense of justice. That is why; for almost a century the people of the world have looked at this method with high hopes and expectations. Not only this, some of the non-violent actions launched per the Gandhian way in different parts of the world achieved unprecedented successes.

Gandhian peace is an individual value. Just as truth and *ahimsa* begins with the individual and get realized in the individual, peace is a great value that should begin with the individual and become the basis for the development of other social and psychological attitudes. Edmond Taylor remarks, “This has produced the great Gandhian personality a combination of inner peace arising from a more total integration of all the elements in the personality than most men achieve." The development of the spiritual personality takes place in total integration with the psychological attitudes. We find this integration revealed in the Gandhian personality. Peace become only a goal but also a condition for self-realization. Peace becomes the necessary condition for the spiritual development of the individual. For this reason the sages and *rishis* of ancient times desired total isolation in their encounter with God. Peace in the individual is identified with divine presence in the religions. For Gandhi peace becomes an individual value of great significance.

Peace becomes a great national goal in the Gandhian context. Gandhi said, “As long as India is not independent she is not in a position to contribute her share to world peace”. What Gandhi strived for was to establish the real peace in India, the kind of peace that will spread to the entire world. Gandhi’s conception independent India meant an India solidly rooted on the principle of peace where truth and *ahimsa* reign supreme. Gandhi's world-wide acceptance and recognition are rooted on his peaceful and non-violent revolution that he exercised in this country. Martin Luther King says, “With a small group of devoted followers, Gandhi galvanized the whole of India, and through a magnificent feat of non-violence

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

challenged the might of the British Empire and won freedom for his people”. The non-violent revolution Gandhi galvanized set forever the light of peace that could guide the country in the right direction. It is this peace that Gandhi wanted Indians to enforce and develop because the very survival of the country depended on it. Gandhi wanted India be symbol of peace for the world because the great heritage of the country always symbolized peace. Gandhi wrote, “If India becomes free during my lifetime, and if I have the strength for it, I shall remain outside the official world and fulfill my duty of building a nation fully based on non-violence”. A nation based completely on non-violence only can enjoy the privilege of allowing the people to live of peace, truth and love.

Peace becomes an international goal in the framework of Gandhism. Today peace is the catch-world in international relations because the world has come to realize more than ever the vital role of peace in the very survival of mankind. At the time of Gandhi’s assassination Earl Warren wrote, “The Assassination of Gandhi removes from the world by a cowardly act a powerful force for world peace. Gandhi was essentially a man of peace”. The world recognised Gandhi’s contribution to world peace in ways more than one. Gandhi professed his love of the British, the American and Europeans as a whole at the same time he deplored the violent sophistication and advancement of the West. Gandhi loved the British but hated their ways. He writes recalling his role in the Boer War of 1899: “I felt that I demanded the rights as a British citizen it was also my duty to participate in the defence of the British empire”. Based on this conviction Gandhi formed the Peace Corpse which consisted of 1100 members to provide relief work. Gandhi’s love of the British was part of the great and universal drive he had for peace. Gandhi always set his eyes on world peace as the foundation on which to build a world of truth and love. He says, “Once we accept truth and love as the foundations of our existence, then we have discovered the foundation of the unity of humanity”. The unity of humanity can be based only on the principle of peace as the necessary condition for the development of truth and love in the hearts of men. Gandhi saw the message of Christ as a unique expression of peace in the world: “I want the help of especially Christians to strength my conviction in non-violence because thousands of them believe that the message of Christ is the message of World Peace and good will”. Gandhism stands for international peace. It is only through peace that the world can move in the path of truth towards God.

Peace and national integration are inherently correlated. So far as India is concerned national integration bears supreme importance because India’s unity is a unity in diversity. Diversity in this country is indeed a great phenomenon. True peace in this country is possible only through the integration of these diverse political, social, cultural, religious and geographical elements that divide the country far and wide. Peace through national integration was one Gandhi’s foremost aims. Edgar P. Snow writes, “Gandhi never ceased to try to unite his countrymen and indeed with the whole world under the homely injunctions common to all faiths: individual perfection, tolerance, humility, love of nature (God), equality, brotherhood and cooperation”. Gandhi had the great foresightedness of envisaging an India united under one National flag not merely on the basis of political unity but an integration that would supersede all the differences under the supreme directive of truth and *ahimsa*. Keeping his eyes fixed on the ideal of peace and integration Gandhi said, "Hinduism must purge itself of untouchability, remove all distinctions of inferiority and superiority, and shed a host of other evils and shams that have become rampant in it.”

Gandhian spirituality is founded on peace. Gandhi says, “In violence we exhibit not the spirit but the brute in us”. The spirit can be realized and nurtured only in a state of non-violence that is peace. All aspects of spirituality that can be practiced by the individual and can lead to God are based on peace in the individual as a condition for divine light. God’s light in truth and love will shine on the individual only in a state of peace. Spirituality is the realization of truth and the vision of God through prayer, sacrifices and spiritual exercises that were so dear to Gandhi. He says, "*Ahimsa* is the only means to the realization of truth…. A perfect vision of truth can only follow a complete realization of *ahimsa*”. Peace is a state of complete non-violence in the individual, society and nation. Gandhian spirituality can be realized and developed only within the framework of peace that should reign in the individual. Where there is no truth there cannot be peace and where there is no love, again, there cannot be peace. Peace in the genuine sense would thus become the co-principle of truth and love.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) How important is the principle of non-violence in resolving conflicts?

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………….

2) Can a peace seeker be a *status quoist*?

…………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………...

……………………………………………………………………………………...

4.3 TOLERANCE AND HARMONY IN GANDHISM

Man’s tolerance of one another’s wrongs, tolerance and forbearance of social differences is fundamental to Gandhian thoughts. Tolerance is basic to the survival and progress of individuals, society and the nation. Dwight Macdonald says, “He practiced tolerance and love to such an extent that he seem to have regarded the capitalist and the garbage man as his social equal". Tolerance is a fundamental Gandhian virtue that makes the Gandhian *ahimsa* a most potent thing. Tolerance becomes a refinement of the most powerful principle of *ahimsa*. In a country like India more than anywhere else tolerance becomes central value for different reasons. India is a divided country with fundamental religio-philosophical and cultural separatism. This separatism is reflected most in our Hindu-Muslim and other communal rivalries and parochial tendencies. Gandhi saw that these communal rivalries would be a death–knell to the survival of this country. Gandhi's experiences after the partition immensely proved how malicious and terrible communalism in India could turn out to be. The Hindu–Muslim massacres after the partition compelled Gandhi to undertake a fast unto death, which he stopped on assurance from rivalries would be stopped at once.

Against this background tolerance is felt to be a very fundamental value in this country. Today tolerance is a constitutional value as an attitude fundamental to the democratic practices in this country. Tolerance and the fundamental rights are absolutely correlated. It requires tolerance on the part of one individual to recognize the democratic rights of another. It requires tolerance similar to recognize the constitutional rights of communities. This recognition require forbearance which we call tolerance in this context. The rights of individuals and communities call for tolerance on the part of other individuals and communities. Here tolerance becomes a positive virtue and enters into the very realm of *ahimsa* or love. Martin Luther King writes, "We will return good for evil. We will love our enemies. Christ showed us the way, and Gandhi showed us how it could work". Tolerance becomes love in its positive directions and Gandhi carries it to the logical extreme of loving one's enemies in line with the teachings of Jesus Christ. Tolerance as a constitutional value with reference to the fundamental rights takes the direction also of justice. It is merely allowing the other the necessary justice that he naturally deserves. Gandhi says, "My experience has shown me that we win justice quickest by rendering justice to the other party". Tolerance becomes justice paid in equal measure to those who owe it under given social setup.

Just like peace, tolerance becomes an individual value aimed at the development of the human individual. Relationship between individuals based on tolerance becomes fundamental to a spiritual society Gandhi envisaged. Differences in personal attitudes, aptitudes and endowments are basic to human life. These differences and the socio-economic status that becomes attached to these are part of socio-communal life. Individual tolerance becomes important when Gandhi wants these differences and the ups and downs to be forgotten in building a society based on truth and *ahimsa*. Dwight Macdonald writes, "It is true that Gandhi compromised with the rich, those untouchables of the class struggle, living at their villas. But he also compromised with the poor spending as much time with them". Gandhi showed the world that tolerance was the key principle in mutual help and self-less service. This would mean accepting the enemy or the stranger with all the pitfalls that he usually has.

Tolerance becomes a social goal in Gandhian frame of social set up. Social development at all levels of interaction comes to be based on tolerance from this view point. If the tolerance of individual differences is significant in individual development, in the same token, tolerance is the fundamental in social development. Social development is impossible without different communities interacting with each other. Conflict and rivalries arise when it comes to the benefit of one community, perhaps, at the cost of another's inconvenience or loss. Tolerance plays a major role here in effecting a clear balance between such differences. Tolerance coupled with a sense of justice would prompt one community to accept the other and work for its development.

Gandhi attached such a great importance to communal tolerance with reference to Hindu-Muslim rivalries and problems of interaction. Gandhi always went out of the way to convince the two communities of the great necessary of mutual tolerance, even at the cost of his own life. Gandhi kept on reminding Indians at large that the two communities are part and parcel of the very same nation. Whenever the question of separatism arose, Mahatma Gandhi and others, and the leading News Papers never hesitated to remind the Muslims that they belonged to the same race and nationality as the Hindus. Ethnic tolerance was the unique solution for the communal problems and Gandhi gave the highest priority to the value of tolerance within the framework of *ahimsa*. If the truth is the aim at the individual, social and national level of life, then tolerance remains to be a concurrent value along with peace for development at these different levels.

4.4 PEACE EDUCATION

Peace and tolerance are fundamental goals of education. Education considered from whatever viewpoint ends up in a rediscovery of peace at the very root of all formations and developments. Education aims primarily at helping the individual achieve a state of physical, psychological, social and spiritual balance or equilibrium. In other words, the individual discovers, in the process of education, a self balance in the right attitude towards himself, society and God. This constitutes the state of peace in the individual. It is a process of developing the self in these attitudes. The individual becomes capable of comparing and contrasting his own potentials and achievements with those of others not in a spirit of negative and unhealthy competition but in truth and love. This amounts to the development of peace within oneself. Peace in the right sense is not a negative state of lack of conflicts and problems within oneself. Peace is a positive and dynamic state of integrating in the right manner the diverse elements, conflicts and problems in the personality and obtaining a holistic state of serenity. In Gandhi's own words this becomes a successful search for truth: "A successful search for truth means a complete deliverance from the dual throng such as love and hate, happiness and misery". It is not the cancellation of diverse elements but the harmony and integration of these elements that constitute peace in the individual as part of the development of his personality.

Education aims at promoting peace in the nation. Development of attitudes of peace in the individual leads to collective of attitudes of the peace in the individual leads to collective endeavors for peace in the nation. This has dimensions. On the hand education ensures that the individual grows up in full awareness of the significance of peace at the national level, and on the other hand education attempts to direct this individual awareness to actual peace at the national level. Through the right orientations of educational content and methods and through the provision of learning experience the awareness and a feeling of urgency for peace at the national level can be developed. Peace and tolerance go hand in hand. Peace and tolerance go hand in hand. Peace can be regarded as the end and tolerance as the means and the method. Education should help students to price the value of peace and tolerance more than anything else.

Once Gandhi was asked by a student: “What can students do to create Hindu-Muslim unity? Gandhi answered, “The way is simple. Even if all the Hindus turn out to be hooligans and begin insulting you, you should not stop considering them your brothers in blood”. Gandhi had no excuses and compromises for his principles and his admonitions took an absolute nature. That shows the level of greatness and the depth of sincerity he attached to these principles. Gandhi made it clear that education has vital role to play in developing peace and tolerance in all the affairs of the country, especially at the level of decision- making. The process of developing an intense awareness of peace permeates all levels and all aspects of education. It is not possible for education to have separate stream of 'peace education' along with other subjects and disciplines. But education should be in clear position to integrate peace values with all other aspects of the curriculum.

Gandhi saw the evil practice of untouchability as major obstacle to the practice and realization of peace and tolerance in the real sense of the word in several parts of India. Untouchability reigned supreme even in the days of Gandhi and he remained conscious of its evil effects. He emphasized the role of education in creating the necessary wave against these evil practices. He felt national schools should be capable of spreading the message of *charka,* unite the Hindus and the Muslims, educate the untouchables and thus remove from schools the curse of untouchability. The practice of untouchability grieved Gandhi to the depth of his personality. Education is the only solution to curb this practice if it is still persisting is any from in any part of the country. Ways in which one community considers another as inferior is another form of untouchability and this practice comes directly opposed to the ideal of peace and tolerance. Obstacles to the ideal of peace and tolerance crop up in different ways. Very often people fail to recognize that such ways have anything to do with the maintenance of peace and tolerance. Education has sacred duty to safeguard the values of peace and tolerance from all such lapses that may occur in the individual, society or nation.

Education aims further at international peace, and tolerance at the level of nations. The Gandhian message of peace has gathered significance more than ever on the face of the growing arms race between world powers. The modern world has the ever growing feeling that humanity is moving towards a nuclear end. The nuclear holocaust has to be averted. Gandhi’s efforts for peace in the world can be regarded as the only solution to divert such a holocaust. Norman Thomas says, if ever men achieve a world peace, to no single man will it owe a greater debt than to Mohandas K. Gandhi”.

Peace becomes part of personality development from all perspectives. Peace-attitudes are part of the individual’s spiritual personality in his attempts to move towards Truth as the ultimate Goal. Education for Gandhi is “the all round drawing out of the best in the child and man-body, mind and spirit”. This best for Gandhi is in fact the inner voice of truth. The strengthening of this inner voice of truth, as all Gandhi’s personal experiments consisted of, is actually the strengthening of peace in all its different perspectives. Gandhi says, “one person who can express *ahimsa* in life exercise a force superior to all forces of brutality”. Peace in the individual becomes the expression of *ahimsa* as peace and *ahimsa* are inseparable. A character well-founded on peace will exercise the attitude of truth and *ahimsa* to others. Peace and tolerance provide a link between personalities of individuals within a given social set up. Peace at the individual level would thus become the blossoming of the personality. The odour of peace in the individual cannot help permeating to outside the individual and exercise the right influence.

The East as a whole and India in particular stood for peace. It was the reflection of peace that the East has produced the World Religions. There is no religion in the world that does not stand for peace in the individual and peace in humanity. Peace is a treasured value for every religion. The contribution of India towards world peace is not sheer contemporary phenomenon but a traditional one. Being the motherland of three major world religions, it is most apparent that India stands foremost for this treasured value of peace. Indian culture thus embodies peace and tolerance as two great principles. Education which aims at the transmission of culture in fact transmits the value of peace and tolerance in the context of India. The right teaching of Indian culture will not be providing a puffed up concept of account of wars but of the great value of peace embodied in our culture. Education at the school level already spends considerable time providing students and experience in Indian culture. This effort can be easily re-oriented to focus on peace so that the work will form a basis for the development of the right attitude of peace in students.

Education for peace and tolerance receive high priority in a world that is facing serious nuclear threat. Educational goals in all their diversities have a dimension of peace with reference of the individual, society and nation at large. These goals require a coordination to bring home the full importance of peace and tolerance. Peace is value that should achieve integration with other values in education. Peace is an attitude that requires development along with other important attitude to produce holistic personality. Peace becomes in the individual’s attitudes towards himself, society and the nation. Education and Gandhism becomes a harmonious whole at the level of peace.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) How important is communal harmony in way of peace and harmony in India?

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………….

2) Reflect on the role of education in creating a peaceful world.

…………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………...

……………………………………………………………………………………...

……………………………………………………………………………………...

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

4.5 LET US SUM UP

The attraction and curiosity of people all over the world towards the distinctive Gandhian view seems to increase day-by-day to revitalize high hopes in the hearts of people more than in the past. With on-going globalization, the genesis of new problems, disputes and conflicts seems inevitable. That is why the Gandhian view in resolving these problems emerges as one of the best and noble alternatives available to the world. It can show the people the pathway to prosperity and peace opening the doors to both prosperity and peace through mass awakening, cooperation and participation of people.

4.6 KEY WORDS

Harmony: coming together of seemingly conflicting positions/ values.

Peace-education: seeks to build a peaceful, just and sustainable world.

4.7 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

Allen, Douglas. ‘‘Philosophical Foundations of Gandhi’s Legacy, Utopian Experiments,and Peace Struggles.’’ *Gandhi Marg*. 16 (2): 133–160. 1994.

Dadhich, Naresh. Ed. *Non-Violence, Peace, and Politics: Understanding Gandhi*. Jaipur: Aavishkar Publishers, 2003.

Gandhi, M. K., *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. 100 vols*. New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1958–1994.

Iyer, Raghavan. Ed. *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi. 3 vols*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987.

Johnson, Richard L. Ed. *Gandhi's Experiments with Truth: Essential Writings by and about Mahatma Gandhi*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006.

Mathai, M. P. *Mahatma Gandhi's World-view*. New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 2000.

Parel, Anthony J. Ed. *Gandhi: Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1997.\

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY